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PREFACE.

The length of a newspaper Report of a great debate in Parliament deprives many of the pleasure and instruction to be obtained from its perusal: while the form of the newspaper itself renders it unsuitable for preservation as a record. The object of the present Epitome is to counteract these drawbacks. A debate of important and permanent interest is reduced to an amount which may be read in an hour or two: to a size and type not incompatible with a Library shelf. The Editor has striven to reproduce in each speech every argument bearing upon the actual subject; and, by quoting *verbatim* the more striking expressions, to retain the characteristic oratory of each speaker. Irrelevant, personal, and much declamatory matter has been expunged; but every fact or statistical deduction for the foundation of an argument has been retained. It is thus hoped that in a bulk less than one-fourth of the original debate is contained the cream of the matter, manner, and argument of all the speeches.

Should this Epitome of the Debate on the First Reading of the Reform Bill meet with public approval, it is purposed to produce a similar Epitome of the Debate on the Second Reading, immediately that Debate shall have taken place.

March 1866.

SPEAKERS.

[NOTE.—The letters and figures after each Speaker's name show his generally accepted political opinions (L. Liberal, C. Conservative); and his Parliamentary service.]

March 12.

			Page
MR. GLADSTONE, Chancellor of the Exchequer	South Lancashire ..	[L.—32] ..	1
MR. MARSH	Salisbury	[L.—9] ..	20
SIR JAMES FERGUSSON ..	Ayrshire	[C.—7] ..	22
MR. P. W. MARTIN	Rochester	[L.—10] ..	23
SIR FRANCIS CROSSLEY ..	North West Riding ..	[L.—14] ..	24
MR. CRAWFORD	London	[L.—9] ..	24
MR. SERJEANT GASELEE ..	Portsmouth	[L.—new] ..	24
MR. DUTTON	Cirencester	[L.C.—9] ..	25
SIR HENRY HOARE	Windsor	[L.—new] ..	25
LORD ROBERT MONTAGU ..	Hants	[C.—7] ..	25
MR. HANBURY	Middlesex	[C.—9] ..	26
MR. LAING	Wick Burghs	[L.—7] ..	26
MR. BAINES	Leeds	[L.—7] ..	30
CAPTAIN GROSVENOR ..	Westminster	[L.—new] ..	31
MR. HORSMAN	Stroud	[L.—30] ..	32

March 13.

MR. LOWE	Calne	[L.—14] ..	40
MR. VILLIERS, President of the Poor Law Board	Wolverhampton ..	[L.—31] ..	50
MR. R. N. PHILLIPS	Bury	[L.—2] ..	52
MR. LEATHAM	Wakefield	[L.—new] ..	52
MR. ARTHUR W. PEEL ..	Warwick	[L.—new] ..	53
MR. ALLEN	Newcastle-under-Lyme	[L.—new] ..	53
MR. SCHREIBER	Cheltenham	[C.—new] ..	54
MR. LONG	North Wilts	[C.—7] ..	54
MR. MELLER	Stafford	[C.—new] ..	54
MR. ACKLAND	North Devon	[L.—10] ..	55
MR. WHITESIDE	Dublin University ..	[C.—15] ..	55
MR. FAWCETT	Brighton	[L.—new] ..	58
MR. BRIGHT	Birmingham	[L.—23] ..	60
VISCOUNT CRANBOURNE ..	Stamford	[C.—13] ..	63
MR. JOHN HARDY	Dartmouth	[C.—1] ..	65
MR. HIBBERT	Oldham	[L.—4] ..	65
SIR RAINALD KNIGHTLEY ..	South Northamptonsh.	[C.—14] ..	65
MR. W. DUNCOMBE	North Riding	[C.—12] ..	65
MR. GLADSTONE, Chancellor of the Exchequer	South Lancashire ..	[See above] ..	66

REFORM: 1866.

ON THE MOTION FOR LEAVE TO BRING IN THE BILL.

324.42
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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, March 12, 1866.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER asked that the paragraphs of the Queen's Speech which related to the Electoral Franchise might be read at the table. This motion having been agreed to, the CLERK at the table read the paragraphs as follows:—

"I have directed that information should be procured "in reference to the rights of voting in the election of "Members to serve in Parliament for counties, cities, and "boroughs.

"When that information is complete, the attention of "Parliament will be called to the result thus obtained, with "a view to such improvements in the laws which regulate "the rights of voting in the election of Members of the "House of Commons as may tend to strengthen our free "institutions, and conduce to the public welfare."

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER again rose, and, addressing himself to the Deputy Speaker, said—Sir, taking into view the extent and complexity of the question itself, the strange fluctuation of circumstances which has marked its history, and the weakness of the hands into which it has now fallen, I may say that few Ministers have, in recent years, risen

under greater difficulties than attend my present task. Those difficulties affect in the first place Her Majesty's Government; but, though concentrated in greatest weight on us, they are not ours alone. The interest of the question is common to the whole House and to every party, or section of a party, sitting in it. For these, read just now, are not the only paragraphs in which the representation of the people has been brought under the notice of Parliament. By no less than five Administrations, in at least five Royal Speeches, have Ministers affirmed that the time had come to revise the representation of the people. Those speeches have not been confined to periods when one side of the House was in power. In 1859 and 1860, both parties gave those solemn pledges in the face of the country. With such an accumulation of authority from every quarter in my favour, I hold it superfluous to discuss the general question of whether there ought to be a revision of our electoral system. I assume that these repeated declarations have established the necessity of Reform, and I now ask grave and earnest attention to the serious measure I bring forward on the subject. The origin of this question is emphatically the work of Parliament. Let me remind the House of what occurred in 1851, an event which in a high and peculiar sense saddles with the responsibility of its introduction not one or other Government, but the House of Commons itself. An independent member—the member for East Surrey (Mr. Locke King), on the 20th February, 1851, moved for leave to bring in a Bill to grant a 10*l.* occupation franchise in counties. The sole opponent of that motion was Earl Russell; every other member either approved or was silent. The Government were beaten by a majority of twenty-one. The minority consisted of fifty-two members, and among those not more than twelve or fifteen sat on the benches of the party opposite. The initiation of the question of a county franchise, which, it was understood, must speedily be followed by the question of the borough franchise, rested therefore peculiarly with the House of Commons. We consequently invite you now to a work which is our common interest. The election of a new Parliament marks the time when the sense of the people's representatives should be taken in regard to our electoral laws. The Government duty was plain, to examine the materials of the case, to cast aside every consideration narrower than the great public and national interest, disregarding the

mere convenience of this party or that, to be more studious of the substance than of the shadow, to apply their best powers to the framing of a prudent, but effectual measure. Then to await the issue at the hands of Parliament; but as far as depended upon them, having framed their measure, to sustain and support it with all the energy and decision they could command.

Our first question was most important, whether to attempt legislation or merely to inquire, in the present session? Careful examination of facts lay at the very threshold of the subject. Want of definite and authentic information formed the great object of contention in the debates of 1860. Such were the doubts, misgivings, and scepticism on both sides in regard to the figures, that we felt it essential to make Parliament, as well as ourselves, masters of the statistics of the case. Well, before approaching any other public domestic question, the present Cabinet devoted itself to considering the heads upon which such precise information was needed. Measures were immediately taken to procure the information under the heads decided on, and the duty has been ably carried out by the Poor Law Board, and especially by Mr. Lambert, who has been principally concerned in the collection. Members will admit they approach the question with a knowledge of facts they never possessed before. Had we failed to obtain this information we should have postponed legislation, but when we saw what could be procured, and the manner in which the statistics rolled in upon us, we did not hesitate, as early as the commencement of the session, to pledge ourselves to the introduction of a measure on the subject. Murmurs have been heard at the delay in the production of these papers—delay which has been ascribed to the hesitation and vacillation of Government. This was not the case, for on Friday evening I could not obtain even for myself a finished copy of the papers, other than the copy laid on the table of the House, which consequently had to pass out of my hands. It is now the 12th March when I make you the first proposal for the introduction of a Bill; but Easter approaches, and it will be impossible to read it a second time before the second week in April. We had therefore to measure our powers with regard to legislation in the present session. Then, of course, arose next the question, Are we to have what may be termed a complete measure or one that is incomplete? Now, what is meant by a complete revision of our electoral

system? I must omit from a complete definition some branches of legislation which are or have been favourites with a portion of the members, and which the Government do not admit to be necessary. Therefore I do not refer to such questions as secret voting or shorter Parliaments, but to what belongs really to a complete revision of our representative system.

In the first place must be considered the franchise in England and Wales, and in Scotland. The Irish franchise also must be considered; but that question is simple, as the electoral arrangements in that island are much more perfect than in this country. Then comes the group of questions included in the phrase "re-distribution of seats;" questions between the three kingdoms, between town and country; between total extinction, as in Schedule A, milder amputation, as in Schedule B, or the yet milder grouping of boroughs together proposed in 1852. Then there is another question which can never be avoided in reviewing your electoral system—the present boundaries of boroughs. The natural boundaries of each, as determined from time to time by public convenience, are an essential part of any complete review of our electoral system. Not less urgent is the consideration of the law with respect to corrupt practices at elections. Lastly, comes a question of importance concerning the machinery for registration, and for holding elections. These questions have been further complicated by the speculations of many men of great ability and authority. I attach no great importance to the propositions founded on these speculations, which, however ingeniously supported by argument, are innovations demanding careful, searching, and jealous examination.

Would it be possible for Parliament to devote itself during the present session to the complete review I have described? The omnipotence of Parliament is a grand, constitutional idea; but time and space yet exist; and I would ask, what is the time at our command, and what the time requisite for dealing with this question? The second reading being the 12th of April, there will be about twenty-four Government nights between that and the middle of July, which will be the latest period for sending such a Bill to the House of Lords. Of these twenty-four, one-half must necessarily be occupied with financial business. Beyond this, we shall be dependent on the charity of private members. What happened on similar occasions in former

years? In 1860 we spent whole nights in trying to do nothing. The great Reform Act gives an idea of the time required by complete reviews of our electoral system. One out of three Bills occupied fifty nights of the House of Commons; but 100 nights at least were needed for the complete review achieved in 1831-32. Certainly at that period there was political heat and apprehension not now existing, and such a review at the present day would occupy less time. But the time occupied in passing that and the subsequent Acts was six or eight times that now, by the most sanguine estimate, at our command. Then, you completely reviewed your electoral system; but you turned day into night, summer into winter; you sacrificed every man's domestic engagements: you sacrificed, for two years, all other serious legislation. Circumstances are now different: we hope for indulgence, and I do not anticipate obstruction. In 1860, Mr. DISRAELI called for deep and deliberate investigation: to pass by such a call would be a breach of duty on our part. We have, therefore, determined that it is impossible to do more than approach this question; than to take first, what is first in natural order of importance, which we do not doubt to be that which relates to the enfranchisement of large masses of our fellow-countrymen now excluded from the electoral suffrage, but qualified, as we believe, to use it. To have introduced a Bill which did not include these first and most legitimate claimants, would have rendered certain another most disastrous and discreditable failure. We therefore determined to confine our Bill to the electoral franchise, founding our determination on the circumstances amid which we stand, and on the opportunity at our command. It may be fairly asked what view we take of the Scotch electoral franchise? What we think is, that a fair review of our representative system must include, if not all, most of the important subjects I have named. The present plan is incomplete; but it will be asked, "Do you "intend to complete it?" I have ever been averse to pledge future sessions. So various are the circumstances affecting an empire like ours, that we must look to the future itself to determine the proper opportunities for dealing with this important question.

Having concluded that we ought to deal with this question of Parliamentary representation, it was obvious that the Bill of 1860—for which as a Government, composed of nearly the same individuals, we were responsible—formed

a natural starting point. Taking, first, county representation, a question beset not so much with difficulty as with jealousy, it was proposed in 1860 in MR. LOCKE KING'S Bill to reduce the occupation franchise from 50*l.* to 10*l.* We now propose a modification of his plan, to reduce the occupation franchise from 50*l.* to 14*l.* That reduction of the franchise from 50*l.* downwards will not precisely correspond with the 50*l.* franchise as it now exists. We leave that 50*l.* franchise precisely as it stands. The occupation franchise between 50*l.* value and 14*l.* value will be an occupation franchise, not of land alone, but of a house, or of a house with land. That is the nature of the franchise which we propose, and the effect may be easily computed from the papers which have been laid on the table. It would correspond as nearly as possible with the effect of a 12*l.* rating franchise. Its effect, after making deductions for those who do not claim to vote, and have not occupied a sufficient length of time, will be to add 171,000 persons to the present number of county voters. I may be asked why we do not go down to the limit of 10*l.*? I certainly know of no danger in such a course; but we think, on the whole, that by the change recommended in the Bill we shall obtain not only a very large, but a very independent, addition to the county constituencies. We think that by going from 14*l.* to 10*l.*, we should render them less independent. It will, I think, be admitted on all hands that this considerable enfranchisement must be viewed as a middle-class enfranchisement, and not in any way a ground for apprehension. The number of the working classes having a 14*l.* rental franchise will be too small to be taken into account. We have, however, looked further, to see if there were interests of a more strictly proprietary character, connected with tenure, the most properly of all belonging to the county franchise, not provided for, and we found such county interests within the limits of cities and boroughs. A 40*s.* freeholder within a borough had a county vote; but if he had a copyhold, a rare case, or a leasehold, a common case, just as valuable as a 40*s.* freehold, and in many cases fifty times as valuable, he had no county vote. We propose, therefore, to give the possessor of copyhold and leasehold property within boroughs the right of voting beyond those boroughs, as if they were freeholders within the limits of those boroughs, and to enable them under the same conditions as those freeholders to come on the county register. Materials are not to be obtained for

estimating the numerical effect of this proposal. The change cannot be large, and it must, I think, be good, as far as it goes, because it will give a kind of representation thoroughly germane to the purposes of a county representation. The only other topic I need name as affecting counties is those franchises new to the Constitution, and distinct from the franchise of tenure and occupation, which may be properly called "special" or "by-franchises." A number of such franchises were proposed by the Bills of 1854 and 1859. They are not suitable or adequate as a general basis for extending the franchise. In general they do not admit any large number of persons whom you cannot get by the old constitutional means of occupation and tenure. They increase the expense of your electoral system by a multiplicity of titles. On the whole, therefore, we are unfavourable to these special or by-franchises; but, notwithstanding, I think there are sufficient grounds for one exception, the *Savings-Bank franchise*. It has the following advantages: first, it meets a prevalent feeling that it is desirable to include within the franchise, by a method of what I may call spontaneous selection, many who could not be included by any other measure of franchise founded on the old principle. It has the advantage of enabling persons of provident habits, but otherwise unable to vote, to take part in the choice of those who govern the country. There is, moreover, the notable gain that a savings bank franchise is attended with no complication of title whatever. Inspection of a depositor's book, occupying one minute, would show the state of his balance. We propose that all adult males, being depositors to the amount of 50*l.* or upwards for two years, whether in the ordinary savings bank or in the Post Office savings banks, shall be entitled to be registered for the places where they reside. That place would commonly be out of the limits of a town, because in towns the nature of the franchise would include the great bulk of such savings bank holders, while a large proportion of these depositors would be below the 14*l.* holding which we propose as the occupation franchise for counties. With respect to the term, two years, for the duration of the deposit, it has been deemed necessary to have a certain period in order to prevent this franchise becoming a means of corruption. Now we find that no less than 94,000 adult males in England and Wales are depositors to the amount of 50*l.*, and of those the depositors for two years amount to 87,000. But we cannot reckon on all this

enfranchisement. In reality, the savings bank franchise would be a delusion as a measure of large enfranchisement. Firstly, a large proportion will be enfranchised by other titles; and secondly, an immense deduction must be made for those who will not bear the trouble of making an annual claim; for as money in savings banks is being continually withdrawn, an annual claim to be put on the register becomes necessary. We do not think this collateral and ancillary franchise will add more than 10,000 or 15,000 people to the county constituencies. However, a franchise generally tends to enlarge itself. This completes what I have to say regarding the county franchise, which we take to be a middle-class enfranchisement not tending to increase the share of the working classes in the representation; but, on the contrary, tending proportionally to diminish that representation, because the influence of the working class, represented by small freeholders, will exhibit a smaller per-centage to the entire county constituency in the provinces.

For the purpose of enfranchisement the inhabitants of towns may be divided into four classes. One, and the principal class, inhabit separately rated houses of their own, and pay their own rates. These, the proper objects of the Reform Act of 1832, I shall call rate-paying householders. The next class consists of persons inhabiting their own houses, separately rated, but whose rates are paid by the landlords. I shall designate these by their best known name—compound householders. The third class, now wholly disfranchised, are those who do not pay their own rates, and whose holdings are not separately rated. They inhabit a separate portion of a house, not separately rated, and they pay their rents without any reference to rates whatever. The first two classes we think to be properly householders. There has been a tendency to consider the third class as qualified for the franchise, though not householders; but I much doubt whether, except in a few instances, as Victoria-street, where the houses are partitioned into separate holdings of superior value, this class should be on the register of voters at all. We hold it better to deal with them as lodgers, in whose class, substantially, they are found. The fourth class are lodgers proper, who inhabit their own rooms, but as inmates in the houses of others.

We now approach the vexed question of the town franchise. What is the present state of the town constituencies? and what progress has been made, as compared

with the population in many towns, since 1832? In 1832 the town constituencies numbered 282,000 voters. Of these, 63,000 and odd were freemen, 44,000 and odd were voters under scot and lot and other old rights, and 174,000 were 10*l.* householders. The ten-pounders rose to 463,000. The gross total of the constituency—we have no net totals—the gross total of the constituency was 514,000. That shows since 1832 an increase of 82 per cent. Within the same period the population of towns has increased as follows:—In 1831 the population of the towns was 5,210,000; in 1865 it was 9,356,000. The increase has been 4,119,000, or 75 per cent. So that the proportion of growth of the constituency in towns (I call attention to this) notwithstanding the vast augmentation of the wealth of the country has but just exceeded the growth of the population. In counties the growth of the constituency has been as great, but of the population much less. I mentioned that the town constituency was 514,000. Double entries having been carefully struck off, the net constituency is 489,000. The 10*l.* voters of the working class represent 108,000. Of the freemen and old voters the working class represents 20,000. That 128,000 gives the working class 26 per cent. Our definition of the working men may be disputed: no doubt it is a large one; but I believe it to be the best definition which can be found. I do not believe it admits of accurate definition, and, perhaps, 10 or 20 per cent. of those so included belong to the debateable ground of being considerably interested in shopkeeping. But deduct those 20 per cent., and the result will still be that 21 per cent, even if not the 26 per cent. of the constituency belong to the working classes. I own it is more than I expected to find. I am very glad it is so; and if the per-centage were still higher, I should like it all the better. But this infusion of the working class in the present constituency is exceedingly unequal. I have gone roughly over the 200 boroughs, and I find sixty boroughs in which the proportion the working class possessed of the franchise is not less than one-third. I gathered thirty other boroughs, commonly boroughs of greater importance, and in these I found the proportion of the working class was not more than one-tenth; and this distribution of the working class is not only unequal, but I must say, as a northerner, it is least where it ought to be largest, I mean in the towns of the north. As an illustration I will mention six towns. In Oldham, with a constituency of 2,375, the

working class represent 315, or 1 in 8 of the population: in Halifax, with a constituency of 1,710, the working class stands at 171, or 1 in 10; in Stockport, with a constituency of 1,348, the working class is 1 in 11; in Bradford, with a constituency of 5,189, the working class is 438, or 1 in 12; in Leeds, with a constituency of 7,217, the working class stands at 523, or 1 in 14; and last of all there is a town that deserves special mention—I mean the town of Rochdale, not only on account of the distinguished man (Mr. Cobden) by whom it was about twelve months ago represented, but also because before all other towns it has done most to prove the title of the working class to the franchise—the town where originated that remarkable system of ousting the trader and taking their supplies into their own hands, resulting in the greatest comfort and profit to themselves. What is the case in Rochdale? With a constituency of 1,348, the enfranchised working class stands at only 68, or 1 in 20. If, then, the per-centage of the working class on the whole constituency be more satisfactory than I expected, the distribution is less satisfactory. The exclusion in Rochdale of a district naturally belonging to the borough shows, as before stated, that a new arrangement will be necessary as regards boundaries. We have, then, 21 or 26 per cent. of the working class in the present constituency. How was it in 1832? I apprehend that there cannot be the smallest doubt of these propositions—first, that the enfranchisement of the working class in 1832 was not excessive; secondly, that the working class has since 1832 greatly and undeniably advanced in all that can entitle men to some share in the government of their country. It cannot be denied, either as regards education, conduct, obedience to law, self-command, endurance, avidity for knowledge and self-improvement, that the working man, if fit in some degree in 1832 to share political privileges, has attained some additional fitness now. How stands the case since 1832? In 1832 there were 62,000 freemen; I take the proportion of working men to have been 54 per cent. of that number; that is, there were 34,000 belonging to the working class. The scot and lot and potwallopers were 44,000, and only 60 per cent. of these voters belonged to the working class. In my opinion that is a very moderate estimate. The 10*l.* occupiers in 1832 were 176,000. I assume, for the purpose of comparison, that in 1832 the working class represented only 15 per cent. of the 10*l.* occupiers of that day. The result is, that of the total con-

stituency, 282,000, the proportion belonging to the working class was 87,000, or 31 per cent. They are now 26 per cent. If these statistics prove anything they show that the working class, which ought to have been an increasing and growing class, has borne a diminishing proportion, and consequently that the time has arrived for increasing their share in the elective franchise. Gentlemen opposite will derive immense consolation from the distribution of working class voters in different parts of the constituency. There is not unnaturally considerable apprehension that the enfranchisement of the working classes would lead to the diminution of Conservative influence. But how stands the proportion of the working class in the metropolitan boroughs as compared to the rest of the country? England, without the metropolitan boroughs, has in its town constituencies 27 per cent. of the working classes, while the metropolitan boroughs have only 23 per cent. of them, and yet if there be one section of the House Liberal—advanced Liberal—it is the representatives of metropolitan constituencies. I may be asked if we have taken the Bill of 1860 as our guide in regard to towns. In introducing that Bill, Earl Russell estimated, as a maximum, that it would enfranchise 194,000 persons. From later information Sir George Lewis—than whom none could be a more acute and impartial judge—estimated the number at 160,000. MR. BRIGHT had taken it at from 160,000 to 170,000. That was not an unreasonable enfranchisement; but it was badly distributed. The metropolis has one-third part of the population of the whole of the towns in the country, and the operation of the Bill would have been highly unequal as between the metropolis and the provincial towns. Very large numbers would have been enfranchised in very many considerable towns; but in London numbers are excluded from the franchise, who come within the spirit of the law. I refer to compound householders, not less than 40,000 in London alone, and these the Bill of 1860 passed by, being really of no use to London. There the descent of rents from 10*l.* to 6*l.* was of no importance at all. It is true that that Bill for establishing a 6*l.* landlord franchise enfranchised between 160,000 and 200,000 men; and other estimates were placed against ours. The then Member for Marylebone stated that the 6*l.* rental would introduce 400,000 voters: a Committee of the House of Lords decided that such a measure would enfranchise 300,000.

It was in our view essential, as declared by a motion carried in this House in 1859, that any fresh enfranchisement in the towns must be an enfranchisement downwards; but we cannot overlook the claims of those persons who pay rent, a sufficient presumptive qualification, but are at present debarred from the franchise. Our first duty is, then, to ascertain who above the line of 10*l.* are without the franchise, though within the spirit of the law. What are the defects in the law which bring this disfranchisement about? By the present law a man, though otherwise qualified, cannot be brought on the Register unless he has paid the Queen's taxes and local rates made since a certain date. This is usually called the ratepaying clause. Great complaint is made as regards the ratepaying part of the clause. Local officials, biassed by party views, have in some cases not applied for the rates until after the date they should have been paid. This clause we propose to do away with altogether. It works very unequally, and I do not exaggerate in saying that in Liverpool the rates of at least 6,000 or 7,000 persons are habitually collected from the landlords, by arrangements with the parish officers, and the holders disfranchised. In abolishing these clauses, we expect their victims, almost entirely working men, to give an addition of not less than 25,000 persons to the constituency. We then come to compound householders, who should, we think, be treated precisely as rated householders. As an economical truth, it is certain that the rates of compounding houses, though paid in the first instance by the landlords, are ultimately and really paid by the tenant. This payment of rates, therefore, does not found an effective distinction between the classes. The law is defective in this respect, that the name of the compound householder does not commonly appear on the rate book. It ought so to appear, and in an amendment that we shall have to propose in the law of rating, we shall provide that the name of the holder of a house, as well as of any rated holding that is not a house, shall appear upon the rate book; from whence, just like the name of a ratepaying householder, it will pass to the list of voters, without imposing trouble or burden of any kind upon the householder himself. It will be subject to scrutiny by the revising barrister, and, unless proper objection is preferred, will remain on the register. An effective, instead of, as at present, a speculative enfranchisement will thus be given to the compound house-

holder. Birmingham is one instance of this; but the metropolis a far greater one. There, not one in fifty of the compound householders is on the register, and when they are on it is because an election agent has thought it worth while to get them there. That, we think, is not a satisfactory state of things.

Then comes the other class, also very numerous in the metropolis, to which I before alluded, the dwellers in flats and portions of houses which, though having a separate access, are not separately rated. We leave these just as they are. At present, if they can prove their holding to be of the clear annual value of 10*l.* and can get rated, which, I believe, they are entitled to demand, they may by a circuitous process get themselves registered on the list of voters. This process proves generally an insuperable difficulty. That difficulty will be obviated by our Bill, as the man need not be rated. But a public officer can have no means of knowing the rent these people pay. Consequently we must leave this class of persons subject to the burden of claiming. A man who can show that his rooms are worth 10*l.* will come upon the register without having to get rated, but he will have to renew his claim from year to year. We believe this will be an addition of nearly 35,000 persons. Thus far for enfranchisement above the line, amounting to 60,000 persons, viz., 25,000 by the abolition of the ratepaying clauses, and 35,000 by the new provisions of the law with regard to compound householders.

I now come to what is commonly called the lodger-franchise. We propose to place lodgers, properly so called, that is, persons who hold rooms as inmates of another man's family, exactly upon the same footing as those who hold tenements or apartments. These two classes we shall treat together, viz., those in tenements and apartments, and those who dwell in lodgings; and we provide that if they can show the rooms they inhabit to be of the clear annual value of 10*l.*, of course without including either rates, taxes, or rent of furniture, they will be entitled, by claiming year by year, to be placed upon the register. The conditions of time are the same in all cases. In the Bill of 1859 the then Ministry proposed that any person paying 20*l.* by the year, or 8*s.* per week, for any rooms, furnished or unfurnished, should be entitled to claim to be placed on the register. Now, we think there are insuperable difficulties connected with the

rent of furnished apartments. In the first place, the clear annual value of rooms is estimated daily in every town, and is capable therefore of some definite standard; but the rent of furniture, the payment, that is, for the use of moveable commodities, would be a very fluctuating and inconvenient basis for the franchise. But it is more defective still when we consider that the rent includes not only furniture but personal service also. It includes sometimes firing, sometimes cooking, very commonly the use of the kitchen fire. The basis is too slippery for enfranchisement. We think our proposition will include every case, and more than every *bond fide* case, which would have been covered by the Bill of 1859, because furnished lodgings at 20*l.* a-year ought, as a rule, to be worth more than 10*l.* clear annual value. I can give no information as to the numbers who will be enfranchised as lodgers, but my firm belief is that the number will be small, while it will be a middle-class, rather than a lower-class, enfranchisement. The operation of claiming, and that year by year, must be very burthensome to working men, whereas educated young men, such as clerks and men of business, desirous of the franchise, will consider it no trouble. We may calculate, therefore, on a certain amount of middle-class enfranchisement, but I should mislead the House did I pretend to think that many working men would obtain votes under the lodger-franchise. A great number of working men now inhabit tenements, out of whom scarcely any find their way to the register, and therefore I do not venture to add any figures on that head, but take the 60,000, whom I have already named, as the amount of additional enfranchisement by the foregoing propositions.

I now come to the question of enfranchisement below the line—that is, downwards, which is not only a necessary, but the most important part of any measure on this subject. Earl Russell in 1860 adverted to the possibility of changing the 6*l.* rental franchise for a rating franchise of the the same kind. The value of a rating franchise is obvious, as affording a standard fixed, not by a man's own act, but by a public officer for other than political purposes. The Small Tenements Act—adopted in most boroughs—provides that every tenement up to 6*l.* shall have its rates paid by the landlord. Now there would be a great advantage in saying, "We will adopt the precise limit which Parliament has "indicated of the capacity to pay direct local taxes;

"where that capacity begins the franchise shall begin; "where that capacity does not exist, the franchise shall not." However, on looking to the operation of the Small Tenements Act, we found that under it we should not enfranchise more than 80,000 persons, a number which could not be regarded as anything like a settlement of the question. But we were then called upon to consider the great change and reform which has been effected by Mr. VILLIERS, through the medium of the Union Assessment Act. Formerly, the inequality of rating was so gross and monstrous in different parts of the country, that the rating-book would have proved an unsatisfactory basis for the franchise. The rating is now immensely improved; but the question is, is there not another basis, more nearly coinciding with the present basis, though different in local operation, which is better in every way than the rate-book? The basis which I mean is the clear annual value as determined, *primâ facie*, by the column in the rate-book which is called "gross estimated "rental." In every case where rating is good, gross estimated rental is good also, and avoids very many kinds of inequality and injustice which is inherent in rating. The rateable value contains no independent element: it is important to the parish officer, as showing the net value of a tenement to the landlord, but with which the legislature has nothing to do. A man may pay 10*l.* a year for two houses; one, substantial, requiring only 6 or 8 per cent. to be deducted for repairs, while the other, slightly built, may demand a much larger outlay. The same rent is paid; but, under a mere rating franchise, one would be enfranchised, and the other not. We propose, therefore, that the gross estimated rental shall be the basis, and the column of gross estimated rental in the rate-book shall, until contested, be *primâ facie* evidence on the clear annual value.

We thus secure the double object of adhering to the present definition, and of avoiding the inequalities inherent in rating, while we at the same time get the simplicity, certainty, and facility afforded by the parish rate-book. There will, of course, be always an appeal to the Revising Barrister; but in all boroughs, except thirty, the gross estimated rental appears as nearly as possible equal to the rack-rent. Of these thirty boroughs, about half exhibit a considerable inequality, only because the operations under Mr. VILLIERS' Act are not complete; but before any practical steps could be taken under this Bill, those opera-

tions will be completed. There are certain other local cases in the metropolis where the column of gross estimated rental is not in accord with the Union assessment, representing, indeed, a mere conventional sum. This inequality we propose to correct by enactments on the subject; but even while it still exists, the income-tax returns, representing a sum considerably above the rack rent, give a means of applying a sufficient test. The gross annual income-tax returns, allowing for all excesses, give a total valuation of 39,238,000*l.*, and the gross estimated rental, though still defective in some places, amounts to 37,375,000*l.* The difference at this moment therefore is only 1,863,000*l.*, or 5 per cent. We therefore feel that we have got a secure basis of operation which will be the means of introducing a great practical improvement.

The present town constituency comprises 488,000 voters, of whom 126,000 are believed to belong to the working classes, and 362,000 to the classes above them. We propose, as already said, to add 60,000 to the 10*l.* voters. All these I take as belonging to the working classes, and not to the lodger or savings-bank class, both of which would be insignificant, and this would make 186,000 of that class. If a 6*l.* rental were added, the result, calculated upon the most careful investigation, would give 242,000 additional voters, whom I take as all belonging to the working class, making a gross total of 428,000 persons, which would in fact place the working classes in a clear majority on the constituency. I do not think that is a proposal Parliament would adopt. I cannot say I think it would be attended with great danger; but I am sure it is not according to the view or expectation of Parliament. And although I do not think that much apprehension need be entertained with respect to the working classes, yet I fully admit that, upon general grounds of political prudence, it is not well to make sudden and extensive changes in the depository of political power. I do not think we are called upon to give over the majority of town constituencies to the working class. We propose, therefore, to take the figure next above that, viz., 7*l.* clear annual value. The 7*l.* is not very far from that apparently fixed by the Small Tenements Rating Act; but the result, as to admission, will be considerably larger. The net number to whom this would extend the franchise I estimate at 156,000, and from this a deduction must be made of a certain number of freemen who already have the franchise.

Deducting then one-third of the total freemen now enjoying the franchise, there remain 144,000 persons to be enfranchised by the reduction to a 7*l.* clear annual rental. I believe that there are very few persons living in houses between 7*l.* and 10*l.* who do not belong to the working classes. Five per cent. would be an overstatement for such persons, and it is needless to take in view the reduction by this number. Again, some deduction must be made on account of the more frequent removals among the holders of small houses; but on the other hand, an increase will be made from the same class by the abolition of the rate-paying clauses, and by the savings-bank franchise. I think these modifying circumstances may be held to balance each other, and I estimate the addition to the working-class voters by the 7*l.* franchise at 144,000. All admit that the franchise ought to be attainable by the working man. Let us consider his position with regard to the 10*l.* franchise. 10*l.* clear annual value, with the proper addition for rates and furniture, must cost the man not less than 16*l.* I am safe in saying that the working man does not spend more than one-sixth of his income on his house; therefore his income must be 96*l.*, or at least 1*l.* 17*s.* a week continuously, or 2*l.* a week if allowance be made for necessary breaks. Few of the working classes can hope to receive 2*l.* a week in wages, and a 10*l.* franchise is therefore neither liberally nor largely within their reach. The 7*l.* franchise works differently. Adding, as before, 60 per cent. for rates and furniture, it would come in the gross to 11*l.* 4*s.*, representing an income of 67*l.* 4*s.*; or, instead of 37*s.* a week, a little under 26*s.* a week. Now, 26*s.* a week is unattainable by peasants or mere hand labourers, but is generally attainable by the artizans and skilled labourers of our towns.

I will now endeavour to give a general view of the figures in order that they may be placed clearly before the House. In counties, if our Bill becomes law, the working classes will be a smaller proportion of the whole constituency than they now are. In the towns the voters of the classes apart from the working classes amount to 362,000. The working class has now 126,000 persons, and there will be new electors of the working class for houses above the line of 10*l.* amounting to 60,000 and below the line of 10*l.*, so far as we can calculate, 144,000, making the number of the working classes in the constituency 330,000, or a total addition of 204,000 to the 126,000 now included. The

total enfranchisement contemplated in counties is, by the 14*l.* occupation franchise, 172,000, to which, however, is to be added whatever may be thought fit for copyholders, leaseholders, and the savings bank franchise. In towns there will be an addition of 204,000 persons, making a total addition of 376,000, so far as we may venture to offer definite figures on this subject. With respect to the lodger franchise, to the county copyhold, and county leasehold franchise, and the savings bank franchise, we are pretty safe in throwing in 24,000 as necessary to make up round numbers, and in stating that the total enfranchisement will be 400,000 persons, of whom one-half will belong to the working class, and the other half to the middle class—among whom there are many persons of education, although not of great means or fortune. And now as to the proportion which the new constituency will bear to the householders. There is in our towns a population of 9,326,000. Of these the adult males are 2,331,000, and the adult male occupiers 1,347,000. Of those occupying houses at and over 7*l.* there are 847,000. The actual present constituency of 488,000 represents 36 per cent. of the male occupiers. The proposed constituency of 692,000 would represent 51 per cent. of those male occupiers, and of the working classes there would be 330,000 enfranchised against 588,000 unenfranchised, being less than two in five, but more than one in three of the working classes. The actual gross constituency of England and Wales stands thus. There are 550,000 in the counties; and 514,000 in towns: making a total of 1,064,000. But a very large deduction must be made for those who possess a plurality of votes. I cannot think that even upon the most liberal estimate the present constituency consists of more than 900,000 electors. In addition to these, we propose to bring in 400,000, making in England and Wales a total constituency of 1,300,000. The total number of adult males is 5,300,000, so that the whole number enfranchised in town and country will be one in four as nearly as possible. I do not know whether the House would like me to recapitulate very shortly our propositions. The first is to create an occupation franchise in counties including houses beginning at 14*l.* rental, and reaching up to 50*l.*, the present franchise. The second is to introduce into counties the provision that copyholders and leaseholders within Parliamentary boroughs should be put on the same footing that freeholders in Parliamentary

boroughs now stand in for the purpose of county votes. The third is a savings bank franchise, which will operate in both counties and towns, but which will have a more important operation in the counties. In towns we propose to place compound householders on the same footing as ratepayers. We propose to abolish tax-and-ratepaying clauses, and to reduce 10*l.* clear annual value, and to bring in the gross estimated rental from the ratebook as the measure of the value, and thus, *pro tanto*, make the ratebook the register. We propose also to introduce a lodger franchise, both for those persons holding part of a house with separate and independent access, and for those who hold part of a house as inmates of the family of another person. Then there is the 10*l.* clear annual value of apartments, without reference to furniture. We propose to abolish the necessity in the case of registered voters for residence at the time of voting. And, lastly—I say lastly because there are some other provisions, but I do not think it needful to trouble the House with them now— we propose to follow the example set us by the Government of Lord Derby in 1859, and sustained and supported, I must say, by many great authorities, and to introduce a clause disabling from voting persons who are employed in the Government yards.

The plan I now submit makes certainly a large addition to the constituency. The number of persons enfranchised will be greater than those enfranchised by the Reform Act, who did not exceed 300,000. As respects the county vote, we do not apprehend that it will raise any question of principle; as regards the borough vote, we hope that it is a liberal, as we are sure it is a moderate and a safe plan. In towns it alters greatly the balance between the working classes and the classes above them, without, however, giving the absolute majority to the working classes. We shall be told we have done too little or too much. We have done our best. We have taken account of the state of the country, and of the qualifications of the people for the political franchise. We are mindful that the limbo of abortive creations is peopled, unhappily, with the skeletons of Reform Bills. We do not wish to add to the number. If told we ought to have done more, our answer is that it was our duty to take into view the sentiment of the country, disposed to moderate change, but sensible of the value of what it possesses, sensitive with regard to bringing what it possesses into hazard. And whatever the opinion of the growing capacity and intel-

ligence of the working classes, yet it is true of them, as of any class, that it is a dangerous temptation to human nature to be suddenly invested with a preponderating power. We may be told, on the other hand, that we have done too much. I hope that may not be said. I would beg opponents of the principle of extension downwards to consider what an immense value there is in the extension of the franchise for its own sake. Liberty is good not merely in its fruits, but in itself. This is what we constantly say in regard to English legislation when we are told that affairs are managed more economically, more cleverly and effectually in foreign countries. Yes, we answer, but here they are managed freely; and in freedom, in the free discharge of political duties, there is an immense power both of discipline and of education for the people. If issue is taken adversely upon this Bill I hope it will be taken directly, upon the question whether there is or is not to be an enfranchisement downwards. We hold that enfranchisement to be essential, and we cannot look upon this large addition to the political power of the working classes as if it were an addition fraught with nothing but danger. We cannot look upon it as the Trojan horse approaching the walls of the sacred city, and filled with armed men, bent upon ruin, plunder, and conflagration. We cannot join in comparing it with that *monstrum infelix*; we cannot say,—

"Scandit fatalis machina muros
Fœta armis; mediæque minans illabitur urbi."

I believe those persons whom we ask you to enfranchise should be welcomed as recruits for an army. We ask you to give—within prudent limits, but ungrudgingly. Consider how far you can safely extend the pale of the Parliamentary constitution; but do not do it as if you were compounding with danger and misfortune. Do it as a boon to be reciprocated in grateful attachment. Give these persons new interests in the constitution, which shall beget new attachment to the constitution; for the attachment of the people to the Throne and to the laws under which they live is, after all, more than your gold and your silver, more than your fleets and your armies, at once the strength, the glory, and the safety of the land.

Mr. MARSH.—The measure which has just been so eloquently described is the beginning of the end. There have been no petitions for a 7*l.* franchise, very few for a 6*l.*

franchise. The tendency of the Bill is towards universal suffrage. Far from settling this question, it is the very measure to keep it unsettled. In quiet times, those whom it is proposed to admit to the franchise might display Conservative tendencies; but in a political fight, when Conservatism would most be needed, the less Conservative would they be. Look at Australia, where a popular House of Assembly overrides everything. Those who want reform are those who wish to bring us to the level of democracy. Every man favours democracy when he has a particular hobby to ride; at present, the peace party. I deny that democracy favours freedom—commercial, civil, or religious. Protection was the child of democracy; the navigation laws were of Cromwell's time; it required all the energies of the great ruler of France to induce his people to accept free trade; and America, and even some of our own colonies, cling tenaciously to protective tariffs. Does democracy favour freedom in France, where the press is gagged and has received this year twenty-one warnings, six condemnations, four suppressions, and two interdictions? Here democracy enforces the rules of trade unions; in Australia, it seeks to enforce the rules of trade by law. There have been religious democracies in Spain, Naples, and France; but they have not promoted religious freedom. The interests of the working classes have not been neglected here; many acts have been passed for their special benefit. Railways have been compelled to carry them at a certain price; the truck system has been made illegal; the health of towns has been promoted, Post Office savings banks have been established, Government annuities have been introduced, factory Acts passed, a Bill relative to the dwellings of the poor is now before Parliament, taxes have been reduced, and many which are paid are no hardship at all. It is said that the working class has made great advances in intelligence since 1832. All arguments that the intelligence of the working class qualify them for the franchise, apply with equal force to their qualification to serve as jurors, yet nobody contends that the qualification for jurors should be lowered. Wherever are the best houses, there, as a general rule, are the most intelligent people; so that "bricks and mortar," as it is called, forms a very good qualification after all. Any nation starting with a high franchise enters on her political career with greater chance of success than by adopting a contrary course. Belgium started with such a franchise,

while in Italy the franchise, corresponding nearly to our own 10*l.*, has succeeded as far as she has gone. Look on the other hand at Australia, with a beautiful country and an unrivalled climate. Political corruption of the grossest kind prevails. Members of the Assembly accept bribes; legislate for their own gain; abuse each other in the strongest language.

The question is, how to prevent democracy gaining ground? I reply, it can only be done by the inherent excellence of our mixed Constitution, which saved us when the power of Spain was destroyed, and when the French revolution broke out. We ought to show the House of Commons now, as ever, in advance of public opinion. As was said by Sir Robert Walpole, *Quieta non movere*. I feel this most strongly. Others may have heard and read of democracy; but I have seen and felt it in its deepest reality. I hope the House will pause before it does anything to cause us to drift into democracy, or which would do away with that Imperial Parliament by which the country has been governed so long and so well.

SIR JAMES FERGUSSON.—I regard it as a grave prospect that we are to look forward to discussions on this great subject, not only at the present time, but in succeeding years. This is the first time, since the great measure of 1832, that we have been called upon to consider a Government Bill dealing with but a fragment of the great question of the representative system. All previous ministerial measures have attempted to deal with the subject in a comprehensive manner, suited to a settlement of the question for many years to come. MR. GLADSTONE had told me earlier in the evening that inquiries have been set on foot as to the electoral statistics of Scotland; but could give no undertaking as to when the returns might be expected. As to Ireland, the right hon. gentleman has said nothing. But what is the prospect even with regard to England? Is it possible that the question can be fully debated and decided between this time and the middle of July? To my mind the measure is, in one respect, so complex that I am unable to realize its scope and object. Proposals are submitted respecting several of those franchises on which Her Majesty's Ministers had cast so much ridicule when they were proposed by Lord Derby's Government. When exceptional franchises are proposed by Government, it is not to be supposed that others will not be

brought forward by Honourable Members of this House. I presume it is intended to consider next session the representative system of Scotland, in which the electoral body has altered in character, since 1832, at least as much as in England. Ireland will perhaps be ready for consideration in 1868. The question being so difficult, should we not follow the precedent of 1830, when the measure was submitted to Parliament before Christmas, the whole of the following session being devoted to its discussion, instead of as at present, the first stage only being got through before Easter. MR. BRIGHT advocated two months ago the acceptance of the Government proposal, because it might be employed as a lever for future proceedings. Immediately afterwards MR. W. E. FORSTER delivered a similar speech. Now, it is by no means certain that the present Parliament is capable of entertaining the question of Parliamentary Reform. The statistics on which the measure is professedly founded have been produced singularly late. Perhaps no one has shown greater ignorance in regard to them—if I may say so, with the utmost respect—than MR. GLADSTONE himself. Last session he maintained that the working classes were less than one-tenth of the borough constituency. How did this harmonize with the statistics now presented? It showed an astonishing misapprehension of the facts of the case. The general feeling of how deeply we should feel Lord Palmerston's loss is now realized by the proceedings of the Government, professedly immediately after his burial. I utterly disclaim fear at the introduction of the working classes to the franchise; for I have found among artisans intelligence not behind that possessed by large portions of the present constituency. If, however, the object be to maintain a just balance and not to throw the whole power of election into the hands of one class, I am exceedingly surprised at the course pursued by the Government. I look forward with grave apprehension to long discussions of fragmentary portions of great questions, which must cause much excitement in the country, the ultimate results of which cannot, at present, be foreseen.

MR. P. W. MARTIN.—I offer an earnest hope that Government will not mar a measure of enfranchisement by disfranchising the employés in the dockyards. Those people have returned Sir Frederic Smith for Chatham, through several Liberal Administrations. Devonport has recently

returned two Opposition Members; and I think a charge of corruption cannot be sustained against the voters of that place. Neither venality nor bribery having been proved against them, it is too bad to disfranchise them for merely exercising the Englishman's privilege of grumbling a little. I trust that lengthened discussions will not be brought forward to demolish this Bill, and still more that it will not ignobly perish by a shot in the rear from its own allies.

SIR FRANCIS CROSSLEY.—Owing to the instructions under which the present electoral statistics were compiled, I do not consider that they controvert MR. GLADSTONE'S statement last session that the working men formed only one-tenth of the town constituency. I regret that Government has not further extended the franchise to 10*l.* for counties and 6*l.* for boroughs; but, from the fear entertained by the Opposition and by some on the ministerial side of this House, I consider the Government has acted honestly in the measure brought forward, and on that account I and the great body of reformers out of doors will support them. I trust the present Parliament will settle the distribution of seats, but I think it wise to treat the distribution and the franchise in separate measures. The good sense of the House should acknowledge that the Bill is prepared with great care, and is likely to settle the question for a long time.

MR. CRAWFORD.—I wish to call attention to the virtual disfranchisement of electors in large cities, where business is carried on, by the operation of the 7-mile radius, which excludes them from voting because they do not live within 7 miles of their place of business, for which they pay rent and taxes. Times are changed, and a distance of 20 or 30 miles is now, practically, no more than 7 miles used to be. The abolition of the ratepaying clause and the lodger franchise will meet with general approval. The middle course steered by Government will, I think, be generally upheld by metropolitan members. I wish to know whether copyholders and leaseholders in boroughs are to be taken out of the town register and transferred entirely to the county register.

MR. SERJEANT GASELEE.—I think the dockyard disfranchisement a decided blot in the Bill. Scarcely a case of bribery has been proved against that class of voters. I would rather have seen a proposal to enfranchise other classes of public servants, such as those in the Post Office and the Custom-house. I am surprised at a proposition of

disfranchisement from MR. GLADSTONE, and I protest against it.

The HON. RALPH H. DUTTON.—I am not a dockyard representative, but I happen to know many dockyardmen, and am at a loss to understand why by a measure for admitting so many of the working class to the franchise, that very franchise should be taken away from some of the most intelligent among them. I concur with SIR F. CROSSLEY that as Government has resolved on descending from 50*l.* to 14*l.*, and from 10*l.* to 7*l.*, it is scarcely worth their while to stop short in their concession to those who demand a still further reduction of the franchise. I do not fear the working man, but as I read the statistics there seems to be in the towns 26 per cent. of the representation in the hands of working men, and if the large towns, whence the cry for reform principally comes, be taken by themselves, the working class will be found to have 40 or 50 per cent. of the representation. I cannot see who will benefit by the proposed savings-bank franchise: no working man could afford to keep 50*l.* in a savings-bank; a small tradesman would not do so when he could make 12 or 15 per cent. on it in his trade. In practice, the use of that provision will be by persons who will keep 50*l.* in a savings-bank for the purpose of obtaining a vote, without complying with the conditions that would otherwise be required for securing the franchise. My present impression is that the Bill will not be found a satisfactory measure of reform.

SIR HENRY HOARE.—I think the Bill excellent as far as it goes. There is no danger from the admission to the franchise of the men to whom the Bill gives votes. But the present is like giving a carriage without horses. What we want is a measure for the distribution of seats, and unless Government give a distinct pledge that such a measure will be introduced, I shall feel bound to vote against this Bill at a future stage.

LORD ROBERT MONTAGU.—I have misgivings as to the series of Reform Bills in prospect session after session. Year after year the country is to be kept in agitation, and members will never know how to be certain of their constituencies. In my county there are five large towns, of which one is a borough. Reducing the county franchise to 14*l.* will transfer the election of members from the rich farmers, a most respectable class, who now vote, to the small shopkeepers in the unrepresented towns. A simul-

taneous re-distribution of seats might have rectified this, as several towns could have been united in forming boroughs. As it stands, the Bill seems expressly designed to swamp the agricultural interest. Those for whom the franchise is to be lowered are they who, on several recent occasions, have sought to drive the country into war.

MR. HANBURY.—Reserving my opinion on the details, I cannot help expressing my general approval of the Bill, which I think meets all the requirements of those I represent. For the last twenty-five years I have employed a great number of working men, and I can say from my experience that a more respectable and intelligent class does not exist. I do not think they desire to impair the Constitution, which is as beneficial to them as to other classes.

MR. LAING.—The clear issue before us is the question of re-opening the great Reform settlement of 1832, by a measure which, on the face of it, is not a complete and final settlement. MR. GLADSTONE'S speech was one of the most conclusive I ever heard; but my conclusion was different from that which he meant to convey. I can quite believe how late the admirable statistical returns before us were received, for if they had been received earlier the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER must have come to a very opposite conclusion. If they show one thing more than another, it is that the case is much stronger than was supposed for a redistribution of seats, and very much weaker for the extension of the franchise downwards. I say this on MR. GLADSTONE'S own authority, for in 1860 his conviction was that out of the 480,000 persons constituting the borough constituency, above one-ninth belonged to the labouring classes. The others were freemen, scot and lot voters, and here and there 10*l.* occupiers. MR. GLADSTONE'S conviction in 1860 was therefore that the 10*l.* franchise admitted the smallest fraction of the working class. Now these remarkable returns show that in 1860 the Government based their Reform Bill on data which were erroneous to the extent of very nearly 300 per cent. They based it on the calculation that less than 50,000 working men were included in the franchise, and that these were almost entirely freemen, old scot and lot voters; but it was now disclosed that there were 136,000, of whom no less than 108,000 were 10*l.* householders.

The only valid reason I ever heard for re-opening the settlement of 1832 was the belief that it was too rigid and

exclusive, and did not admit the working class to anything like a fair share in the representation. Now these returns prove that so far from being of insignificance in the amount, the share of the working men in the borough representation is 26 per cent. on the whole number of borough electors. So far from the system being rigid, the number is shown to be rapidly and steadily on the increase. No doubt the number of working men admitted in different towns under the 10*l.* franchise is very unequal; but the returns show that it is just in the growing towns, in the great seats of industry, or in the new and rising towns springing into importance, that the increase of the number of working men admitted to the 10*l.* constituency is most marked. Taking the great cities, seats of industry—in Southwark the proportion of working men is as high as one-half; in Manchester it is 27 per cent.; Salford, 34; Sheffield, 50; Wolverhampton, 24; Nottingham and Leicester, 40. The proportion in which working men share the franchise is also peculiarly large in places which have advanced greatly in late years without being seats of manufacturing industry, as Brighton, Cheltenham, and Southampton, in which the proportion has now gone up to 50 per cent. This brings us to a great fallacy of the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, who says that the proportion of the whole is not greater than it was in 1832. But why is this? Because in 1832 they had a large body of freemen, scot and lot, and old voters. They had died out; but their place was more than taken by a new class, who had shown themselves the *élite* of the working class by rising so much above the general level as to occupy comfortable houses at a rental of 10*l.* That was a growing franchise; and if wealth and wages advanced as at present, there would be a steady increase both in the absolute numbers and proportion of working men admitted to the franchise. This greatly reduces the strength of the argument, for re-opening the settlement of 1832, that the working men are almost entirely excluded.

But how stands the case as regards the re-distribution of seats? Could a stronger case exist than that disclosed by the Parliamentary returns? I find forty boroughs in which the population is under 7,000; the number of electors is 400 in each. Those forty boroughs, with an united population of 200,000 and 16,000 voters, return sixty-four members to this House. Contrast that with the single county of Lanarkshire, with a population of 530,000, returning one member.

[Laing.]

Dundee, with a population approaching 100,000, has one member, just one sixty-fourth of the representation enjoyed by the forty small boroughs, whose united population only doubles that of Dundee. Glasgow, with 329,000 population, and more than 20,000 electors, only returns two members against the sixty-four of the small boroughs. In eighteen boroughs, returning twenty-three members, the population has diminished since 1832: while in the largest manufacturing towns in the North the number of 10*l.* electors had in the same time increased 178 per cent. The disparity of representation was here obvious. Take the smallest borough returning two members—Honiton. In 1831 it had a population of 3,509; this was now 3,301. A decrease of 208 had taken place in the number of electors, and there were now but 348 on the register; yet Honiton had as great a voice in the Government of the country as Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Dublin. Such anomalies can only be defended on the ground that they formed part of a great settlement, which has worked well, and which it is inexpedient to disturb. Once re-open that settlement, and there is not a vestige of argument for retaining the existing distribution of seats. In every previous Reform Bill the re-distribution of seats has been recognized as an essential part. The real practical question in any Reform is not whether men who live in 7*l.* or 8*l.* houses are to return the members, but how to contrive such a balance of political power as shall fairly represent all the different interests of the country; above all, as shall strike a fair balance between the Progressive and Conservative elements. Prior to 1832 the country was brought into great danger by the predominance of the Conservative element. But since 1832, could any one say that the Conservative element unduly preponderated? Has not abuse after abuse been reformed, until at last we have no practical abuses left? The existing system works admirably, yet Parliament is asked to re-open most exciting questions. It is all very well for members of Mr. BRIGHT'S school, who regard our present system as an oppressive monopoly, to desire to reopen questions which would excite agitation without settling anything. I am not disposed in any way to assist that school in inserting the point of a lever into the wall of the constitution which it is intended to topple down on my own head. Who can doubt that if this extension of the franchise be granted this year, applica-

[Lmo[.]

tion will be made next year for the redistribution of seats? The balance of progressive and conservative elements in the country depends greatly upon the application of seats taken from the small boroughs. The settlements proposed in 1[illegible]1, 1859, and 1860 gave these seats to ten counties, which was calculated to give the Conservative element a fair counterpoise for what they might lose by the disfranchisement of the small boroughs or the lowering of the suffrage. But if the changes are all in one direction on behalf of the progressive element the balance will be destroyed, and you will risk the introduction of further changes, such as you might not altogether like to contemplate. If once you depart from the 10*l.* franchise established in 1832, what prospect is there of being able to draw a line anywhere else and taking a stand upon any other figure? Once admit the franchise to be a right, and limit it as you may, it will land you in universal suffrage; but hold it to be a trust, and then it follows that it is a trust to be exercised by that portion of the community which has reached a certain standing and acquired a certain stake in the country, and whose ability to act upon solid sense and reflection rather than from inconsiderate impulse may be presumed upon. The figures presented to the House would give more than half the borough representation to the working class, a measure from which Mr. GLADSTONE admitted that the House would recoil. The indiscriminate lowering of the franchise must deteriorate the intellectual quality of the constituency. The returns showed that the places distinguishable by a large number of working men are also unfavourably distinguished in our electoral annals. It will be a matter of notoriety that in the ordinary run of small boroughs to diminish the franchise would be to increase the cost of election. Some of the fancy franchises, if made large enough, would admit a number of the working classes, which would be an unmixed good. What could produce a more excellent moral effect than the savings-bank franchise, if it were low enough? And why not extend the franchise to other classes of property? Why should not any man have a vote who possesses 30*l.* or 40*l.* of realized property of any sort in a bank in any other form?

I feel bound to express my deep disappointment at the Government having resolved to deal with this measure piecemeal and not in one comprehensive scheme. What were the grounds upon which the House is asked to enter-

tain the Bill—simply pledges, given some years ago. I cannot give the Bill my support, and I have given no pledge so to do.

MR. BAINES.—The latter half of MR. LAING's speech consisted of an exposure of the absurd anomalies in the present distribution of seats. That was surely enough to refute his first argument that no practical grievance exists sufficient to call for a revision of the representation. Similarly, in 1830, had the Duke of Wellington affirmed that no conceivable form of representation could exceed in excellence that then existing, and the Reform Act of 1832 was regarded by Conservatives as nothing less than a revolution, subjecting intelligence and education to the ascendancy of the uneducated classes. These prognostications have been falsified, for MR. LAING has just stated, and MR. LOWE stated on a former occasion, that Parliament since 1832 has been a perfect model of a Legislative Body. Certainly, many practical grievances have been removed since 1832; but why? Simply, because of the popular element infused into the Legislature. An extension of this element would, I believe, produce a similar beneficial effect. The practical anomalies cited by Mr. LAING are surely a practical grievance, and it is surely another that the proportion of the working classes in boroughs has sunk from 31 to 21 per cent. MR. GLADSTONE indeed, stated it, at first at 26 per cent., but subsequently assented to 21 per cent.; and considering the unprecedented advance, material, moral, and intellectual, achieved during the last thirty years, it is a grievance that the working class proportion in borough constituencies should be only two-thirds of what it was in 1832. Without regarding the Bill as perfect, I can state that it gives considerable satisfaction on this side of the House, though, perhaps, not to all the Members round me. I rise to point out those parts which are imperfect. MR. GLADSTONE computes the working classes now enjoying the franchise in boroughs at 126,000; but the accuracy of that may be doubted, as several important classes of men are included, who, though in one sense working men, should in truth be classed in a higher rank. The Poor Law Board had directed that small tradesmen should be included, and these ought to be struck off the working class. For instance, there are in Wakefield but 80 working class voters, yet by including small tradesmen or those whose families keep shops, this is raised 120, or 50 per cent. For Oldham, I have been assured that not more

than one-half of the 315 voters returned as of the working class properly belong to that class. Consequently, instead of taking the total at 126,000, MR. GLADSTONE would have been far beyond the mark in taking 100,000, and even that would include many of the old freemen and scot and lot voters. Again, it is wrong to assign the whole 60,000 compound householders to the working class, as a large proportion consists of small tradesmen. It is, further, a mistake to state all those enfranchised by the 7*l.* clause as of the working class; in reality, many of them will be clerks, retired tradesmen, &c. MR. GLADSTONE'S calculation of the number of working men who will have a vote, if the Bill pass, is at least 100,000 too high. Would the country be revolutionized by such a Bill? What are the facts? Out of a total population of 5,180,000 adult males, 1,300,000, or 1 in 4, would be enfranchised; the bulk of the unenfranchised remainder belonging to the working classes. So that, although the working classes are three times as numerous as the upper classes, they will have only one-fourth of the total elective franchise. Notwithstanding these miscalculations, and though the right honourable gentleman might properly have lowered the rental to 6*l.*, there is much in the Bill that is excellent, and I approve of the various minor alterations it contains.

Captain the Honourable ROBERT W. GROSVENOR. —It strikes me that many honourable members fail to appreciate the exact position this question occupies before the country, or the difficulties in framing a Reform Bill which shall raise the people without flooring the Ministry; which shall admit a proportion of working men to the franchise, and at the same time not admit the Opposition to official residences in Downing Street. For fourteen years the question of Reform has been before Parliament; but during that time its position before the country has materially changed. For fourteen, twelve, or even ten years the discussions were confined to statesmen; now, such have been the strides of progress, the unenfranchised themselves discuss their claims in a moderate and intelligent, but firm and determined spirit. It is too much to say there is no agitation in the country on the subject: there is agitation, and the whole strength and colour of it is derived from the fact that it is of a peaceful and orderly kind. Shall we wait until the character of the agitation changes? While Lord Palmerston so ably presided over the last "long Parlia-

ment" there were reasons, personal and political, why the people should acquiesce in a temporary postponement of their claims. Now that that great man is gone, now that all danger from foreign politics is over, now that we have a Government pledged more than all its predecessors to reform, it would be impolitic and dangerous to trifle any longer with the question. No doubt the arguments against piecemeal legislation are of some force in the abstract: no doubt a comprehensive measure dealing uniformly with the subject in all its branches would commend itself to the mind as symmetrical and complete. But would it pass? It is to this hankering after the symmetrical and complete that we owe the long disappointment so deeply dissatisfactory to the people. I am not going to assert that the measure now before us is the best possible; but it will have my cordial support, because I think it fairly embraces the chief points of the long-promised concession. I would remind the House that whatever the opinion of individuals on this or that particular scheme, there is no more important object now than to re-establish among the people that confidence which has been somewhat impaired by a long course of promises lightly broken, and of pledges wholly unredeemed.

The Right Honourable EDWARD HORSMAN.—There are two subjects of congratulation: first, we have the long-expected Government Reform Bill; secondly, it is so very satisfactory to advanced reformers. MR. BAINES is very happy because his own single-barrelled Reform Bill, which would not go off last year, is reproduced, though in a cut-down form. He has, however, quite misunderstood the able speech of MR. LAING, who did not say there were no anomalies in our representative system; but that the anomalies were far greater in the distribution than in the suffrage; that you were beginning at the wrong end in correcting the smaller anomalies, and thereby necessitating new agitation, further demands, and greater changes. At the commencement of his speech, MR. GLADSTONE alluded to the discreditable failures of the past, partly as an apology for now bringing the subject forward. I will not follow him through his statistics: for this question is in reality not a statistical, but a constitutional one. We are not dealing to-day with details, but with principles. First establish the course on which to legislate, and then make statistics subservient as auxiliaries. I prefer dealing with that portion of MR. GLADSTONE'S speech in which he vindicated the policy of the

Government in taking up this question at all. He began by a reference to the past; but of what does that history remind us? Five times have the lips of Royalty been stained by promises which have never been kept. Five times have Ministers been committed to pledges which have never been performed. True! sad! and very discreditable! but to whom? Not to the House of Commons, which was never a party to those pledges. Of the five Cabinets committed to Reform, on four of those five occasions Lord Russell was a prominent member of the Administration; and it was he, and he only, who insisted on the introduction of those Reform Bills, and they were notoriously introduced less to meet exigencies of the nation than the exigencies of a particular Minister. This is an important fact; for there is a vast difference between one individual Minister four times insisting upon the necessity of a change and four distinct and separate Ministers approaching the question from opposite points of view and concurring in the same necessity. But Mr. GLADSTONE threw the responsibility of originating this measure not on the Ministry but on Parliament. How did he prove that? He says that, in 1851, there was a division on Mr. LOCKE KING'S Bill, and that therein Lord Russell was defeated, and that it was in consequence of that defeat that the House of Commons forced upon Government the necessity of legislating in this direction. This, according to MR. GLADSTONE, was the foundaton for all the subsequent proceedings of the Government; but if I can show the foundation to be rotten, the whole superstructure comes tumbling to the ground. What are the facts? It was in the debate on the introduction of the Bill that Lord Russell spoke; but in what sense? So far from allowing the House to originate the policy of the Government, he rose and said it was twenty years since the Reform Act of 1832 had passed, and he offered to give a pledge that if MR. LOCKE KING would withdraw his motion the Government would introduce a Reform Bill in the following year. Neither the House nor the honourable Member was satisfied with the assurance, and in a very thin House of only 156 Members the Government was defeated by 100 to 52 votes. That division took place on the motion for the introduction of the Bill, a motion usually assented to as a matter of form. But, after MR. LOCKE KING had defeated the Government, the House perceived the seriousness of the question, and in a much larger House rejected the Bill on its second reading by a division of 299

to 83. Lord Russell's promise was given on the introduction of the Bill, and his defeat was in a thin House; while the second reading was rejected by more than three to one. This, then, was the event which was said to show the House so determined to have a Reform Bill. We know from Earl Grey that in the reformed Cabinet of 1852 there was only one Reformer. Lord Russell, on the occasion alluded to, pledged the Cabinet to reform without the knowledge or sanction of his colleagues. His colleagues next year supported his Bill out of consideration for the noble Lord, and because, feeling the Cabinet to be *in extremis*, they knew it could never pass. That Bill was the key to the legislation of the last fourteen years, and shows that the series of Bills brought in by a succession of Cabinets were, in effect, the work of one and the same man, tending to one and the same end. The Bill of 1854 was pressed by a reluctant Cabinet upon a reluctant House, in the teeth of protests from all quarters. The House and the country alike refused it support. In 1857, Lord Palmerston confessed that a Bill was not prepared. Then came the Bill of the Derby Cabinet in 1859, which rather took the Liberal party by surprise, and was nearer legislation than we have been since that time; and it was universally admitted to be a better Bill than any Lord Russell's Cabinet had ever produced; but the country did not want the Bill, and it was notoriously against the feelings of the great majority of the party by whom it was introduced. Next came the Bill of 1860, with an unexampled conjuncture of Parliamentary leaders in its favour. The nation was in despair, and so made itself felt, that the House of Commons rebelled against its leaders, wore out the Government with inexhaustible rhetoric, and fairly laughed the Bill out of the House. But the history of these Bills would be incomplete unless I borrowed an illustration very opportunely furnished by Mr. Bright. In declining an invitation in 1860 to a Reform banquet at Glasgow, that honourable gentleman described Lord Palmerston's colleagues—now sitting on the Treasury bench—as preferring "their places to their honour as public men," and as consenting "to the greatest political fraud of our time, rather than leave the Treasury bench even for a season." Now that is strong language, but a specimen of the hon. Member's "pure Saxon." But Mr. Bright expressly concurred in the withdrawal of that Bill; and for five years afterwards gave that Government his undiminished support,

voting confidence in them on the only occasion offered for doing so. Was he not then an abettor in their fraud and dishonour? One month he decries the Government; the next he upholds in the highest terms the same Administration; and the following month the wind changes again.

From 1852 to 1865 this question of Reform has been agitated under the most favourable circumstances. It has been taken up by every Administration, and supported and relinquished by every prominent public man. It has had three-fourths of the press, and all the patriots of one side and the other, in its favour. The Bills were rejected, the agitation a failure, and the country was brought slowly, but surely, to the conviction that the proposed changes were not founded in reason, that they were opposed to justice, fatal to the growth of liberty. The morality, the statesmanship of every class, from highest to lowest, clung with instinctive fervour to the institutions which they saw approached with an unfriendly hand, and with one will and one voice forbad that that old tree of English liberty, that was the growth of ages and the admiration of nations, should be transformed into the brazen image of ignorance and intolerance, which the worshippers of trans-Atlantic equality wanted to set up. Undoubtedly there is no previous instance, at least in our time, of any question five times recommended from the throne not passing into an Act. But the nation demanded to be let alone. The only novelty about this new attempt of the Government is their chivalrous determination to stand or fall by their measure; but the temper of the country and the House has rendered this course imperative. No more trifling with Reform can be permitted. There are three essentials to any Government attempting to deal with the great question of Reform. First, that the Government itself should be a strong Government; second, that the Bill should settle the question for a generation at least; and, third, that the Government should have the power of appealing to the country by a dissolution. Now have we a strong Government? For a test, compare the present body of men with the Ministry which failed to pass Reform in 1860. Then there were ten members in the House of Commons. Four of these that are gone, Lord Herbert, Sir G. C. Lewis, the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Palmerston, remind us, by their very names, that they were the great strength of the Cabinet. To compare that Cabinet with the present is almost like comparing a

living, moving, sentient being with his own skeleton. Then next is this a settlement of the question? MR. GLADSTONE repeated twice, "We have done at least something." Well, but the country does not want you to do something; it wants you to settle something, and if you don't settle something you are not doing, but unsettling everything. Now, a Government cannot do anything so mistaken and mischievous as to raise great issues which it cannot define, and to let loose a force which it cannot control? What are you settling? Do you solve the universally granted question of admitting the masses to a share of political power without giving them a monopoly of it? What is your principle? Is it the old principle of the representation of property? Is it the Manchester principle, that representation and taxation ought to go together? There is nothing in the present Bill to dignify with the name of a principle. It merely goes on the stale device of moving the franchise downwards. What does this settle? Why, MR. BAINES' 6*l.* Bill last year was taken to be only an instalment. But MR. GLADSTONE avows that he does not profess to effect a settlement. He looks to the future to take care of itself. This may be a good rule in a Manchester business; but it is not statesmanship. Of course we can only deal with the circumstances of our own session, our own Parliament, or our own generation; but if we deal with the present on false principles, which will become precedents, we are not leaving the future to take care of itself. No doubt circumstances are shifting and variable, but principles are enduring and eternal; and is it not evident that one false step made upon false principles in this matter is but kindling a conflagration for our successors to extinguish? The right honourable gentleman is the last man from whom I should have expected such a policy for the mere retention of office; for although we know that under some foreign governments the Minister of State is only separated from the herd of politicians by the arrival of quarter-day, we know, and no one better than MR. GLADSTONE, that that is not a perfect measure of the English statesman. Now, as to dissolution, nothing can justify it on any particular question, except the necessity of ascertaining the opinion of the country, with some hope that the response will be favourable to the Government dissolving Parliament. But on Reform the national opinion has been ascertained unequivocally on two recent occasions. The dissolution of 1859 was expressly on Reform, and on Reform the new Parliament refused to legis-

late. Again, in 1865, MR. BAINES' 6*l.* Bill came in close at the end of the session, but members, with the hustings before them, threw it out. I cannot put my finger on one who lost his seat through voting against that Bill; but the independent members who supported it fell grievously on the benches behind me, among the very body-guard of MR. BRIGHT. What more can the Government want with dissolution? It has already shown that the further a man goes in Reform the more precarious becomes his seat, and under such circumstances a dissolution would be suicidal. All upholders of Reform agreed that it could not be, without strong support out of doors. There was none: Lord Palmerston had left the country in profound calm. You remember what Lord Palmerston answered on the hustings to a Mr. Rowcliffe, who asked him why the Government had not introduced a Reform Bill—"Why," answered his Lordship, "because we are not geese." Lord Palmerston would not have allowed England to be governed from Lancashire, or the Liberal party domineered over by Mr. BRIGHT; but the man who had been a pigmy in the hands of Lord Palmerston was a giant in the hands of his successor; and now we are to have Reform, comprehensive Reform, after the Birmingham model. MR. BRIGHT went down a Plenipotentiary of the Government into the provinces, and lashed the people into fury with the recital of imaginary wrongs and fabricated grievances. If we have not had the riots of 1831 revived, we are indebted for our escape, not to MR. GLADSTONE'S colleagues, but to the good sense and loyalty of those who are wiser in head and sounder in heart than some incendiary politicians in high places, who have done their utmost to excite the nation. I have treated this as a Government measure, but we all know it is so only by courtesy; and that however short it may fall of the original conception and design, it had its birth, not in Downing-street, but in Birmingham.

Now, what are the titles to our confidence and support of this new ruler whom Earl Russell seems determined to set over us? I do not deny that MR. BRIGHT is sincere in seeking to bring about the changes which he advocates; but I maintain that he does not desire them in the sense in which we do, viz., for the reforming, and strengthening, and perpetuating what we admire and value in England. We understand the word "Reformer" only in one sense,—a sincere adherent, friend, and upholder of our present form of

Government, honestly striving to render it more permanent and durable. But if he who professes to be a Reformer be a passionate admirer of Republican institutions, openly avowing that our English institutions are faulty in those respects in which they differ from republican institutions, and that the changes which he would introduce should be gradually after the model of the latter; if he publicly deprecates and decries, not the defects of our English form of Government, but that form of Government itself; then I say such a person cannot sympathize with our views; he cannot honestly co-operate in our objects. Out of MR. BRIGHT'S own mouth, I will ask you to say whether he does not fall under the description which I have given? In the time of the Derby Government he prepared a Reform Bill. The speech, from which the following is an extract, was delivered by him in his official character as representative of those who called him to prepare the Bill:—

"I shall take the course of addressing myself to this question according to the light I have with regard to it from great study, from much consultation with others, and from an honest wish that I have, that the question of Reform should be rightly viewed by every intelligent man among my countrymen. Now, we will mention two or three things that we do not want. We do not propose in the smallest degree to call in question or to limit the prerogatives of the Crown. I believe we are prepared to say that if the Throne of England be filled with so much dignity and so much purity as we have known it in our time, and as we know it now to be, we hope that the venerable monarchy may be perpetual."

But that hope of perpetuity is contingent on the occupation of the Throne always coming up to an almost ideal standard of personal excellence. I call it ideal, because if we look through the long lines of Sovereigns of this and other countries, I know not when during so protracted a reign you can find such another realization of so high a standard. The honourable Member's "if" is quite unknown to the British Constitution. And now we come to the House of Lords. Let us see what the honourable Member's opinions are in regard to the House of Lords.

"We do not propose even to discuss, much less to limit, the legal and constitutional privileges or prerogatives of the House of Peers. We know, everybody knows, nobody knows it better than the Peers, that a house of

hereditary legislation cannot be a permanent institution in a free country."

Now, I deny that the peers, this House, or the country know any such thing. I say that the Constitution entirely contradicts the Member for Birmingham. The Constitution says that an hereditary peerage is a permanent institution in a free country, because it is compatible with freedom. I believe that there is an irreconcileable enmity between democracy and freedom; but I know of no irreconcileable enmity between freedom and an hereditary House of Lords. On the contrary, I believe that it is its hereditary character that secures to the House of Lords the independence that renders it a stronger bulwark of freedom than an elective Chamber can possibly be. But when the honourable gentleman says that an hereditary peerage is incompatible with freedom, what is that but saying that it ought to be abolished, or, in other words, that the Constitution ought to be so far abolished? The hon. gentleman would have the monarchy elective, the House of Peers elective, and the House of Commons chosen by universal suffrage. What then becomes of the British Constitution, and how far are we removed from a republic? This is the hon. gentleman who is the confidential adviser of the head of the Cabinet, and the director and dictator of the Liberal party. I believe much of the future of England must depend upon the spirit with which this new House of Commons realizes and rises to the discharge of its first and most responsible duty. That is, to vindicate the supremacy of Constitutional opinions—to spurn the dictation of an intolerant minority—to uphold those principles of freedom which have not been successfully defended against the encroachments of monarchs and the passions of the multitude in order to be now surrendered at the feet of a more ignoble tyranny; and that policy of progress—of sound, peaceful, and constitutional progress, which has hitherto reflected the growing intelligence of the nation, and which can only be arrested or fatally driven back by the successful machinations of those who would trade alternately on the weakness of Ministers whom they despise, and on the ignorance of the masses, whose contempt for the abortive agitation of the last four months has proved how deeply sensible they are of the blessings of the institutions under which they live, and how they have become too enlightened to be deluded, and, to the disgrace of demagogues, betrayed.

[Lowe.]

On the motion of MR. LOWE, the debate was then adjourned till the following day.

Tuesday, March 13, 1866.

Debate resumed.

The RIGHT HON. ROBERT LOWE.—In the course of a long and illustrious political career, this House of Commons has gathered into its hands a very large proportion of the political power of the country. It has outlived the influence of the Crown; it has shaken off the dictation of the aristocracy; in finance and taxation it is supreme; it has a large share in legislation; it can control and unmake, and sometimes nearly make, the Executive Government. When British history shall be the history of a nation passed away, it may probably be thought that too much power was concentrated in the House; too much hazarded on the personal qualifications of its members. In proportion to its power, is the effort high and noble of endeavouring to amend its constitution. Let it not be lightly tampered with. In any extension of the franchise, we should always bear in mind that the end we ought to have in view is not the class which receives the franchise, but the Parliament itself by which political power is exercised. To consider the franchise as an end in itself, is to mistake the means for the end. The franchise is an enormous advantage to the country; but to look on it as the end rather than the means, is like the man who, finding that money contributed to his pleasure when young, and to his power in middle life, at the end of his days, when pleasure could charm no more, and power was beyond his grasp, turned his attention from the end to the means, and loved the money for its own sake. MR. GLADSTONE has not dealt altogether respectfully with the House in calling upon us to entertain a proposition touching most nearly a vital part of our constitution; effecting, if carried out, an immense redistribution of political power, and an enormous alteration in the constituencies, without stating the reasons which induced the Government to lay the proposition before us. I am not wedded to anything just because it exists, and I am prepared to follow experience

and expedience as my political guide. As far as my own feelings are concerned, I care not what the amount of the franchise is, or what the place in which parliamentary power is vested. But although, therefore, I am perfectly ready to entertain this question, I think it but fair to existing institutions to say that the burden of proof is in their favour; that the presumption is in favour of that which is, until it is removed by some argument which shows that that which is can be replaced by something better. The Chancellor of the Exchequer seems to consider the burden of proof to lie in the opposite direction. I, for one, deprecate a proposal to pull down the noble work of our forefathers, before a single word is said to show why we should assail it. MR. GLADSTONE found time enough to discuss many less important subjects. He discussed with the utmost sagacity and felicity the difference between "annual value" and "gross estimated rental;" he was eloquent on compound householders, tenants of flats, lodgers, and other abstruse personalities; but he did not find a moment to explain why the Constitution, under which we have so long lived, should not be left to us a little longer. The Bill proposes, briefly, to increase the whole electors of the country, estimated at 900,000, by 400,000, that is, by one-half of the present constituency. MR. GLADSTONE proposes to make 171,000 new electors in the counties, and 204,000 in the boroughs, the latter being derived almost exclusively from the class of persons renting at 10*l.* or under. As regards the counties, the proposition will very much enlarge the electoral area, enormously increase the expenses of elections, and create a great redistribution of political power. Whether right or wrong, we should have a reason for this change. The right honourable gentleman opposes the county voters, as being of the middle class, to the borough voters, as being of the working class; and according to his showing we are to have in the boroughs 330,000 voters of the working class, and 360,000 not of the working class. That is the system he proposes for our adoption. Now the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER admits, and the statistics before us prove, that one-fifth of the whole number of electors are of the working class. This is a grave and momentous fact, proving, firstly, that Government were entirely mistaken on the main ground on which they introduced the present measure, viz., that the best of the working class were excluded from the franchise. I make this statement on the authority of a work on the English Government

and Constitution issued by Lord Russell twice in the course of last year. It is clear that the noble Lord wrote under a delusion, which was shared by almost every gentleman on the Treasury Bench. These statistics prove that the franchise has to a great extent been within reach of the working class, and the Bill having been proved to be grounded on a mistake, I ask under what principle the Government propose now to go on with it? We have no statistics to show when it was, that the great increase in the constituencies took place. There has, however, been a great expansion in everything during the last fifteen or sixteen years, and we know that the causes of this expansion are permanent and not transitory. The first is the gold discovery in California and Australia, which has caused an apparent rise of prices, so that both rents and wages have risen. The great and continued emigration from Ireland has also kept up the rate of wages: while again the vast extension of our trade and commerce has made labourers more and more in demand. Therefore we shall not be wrong in considering that these causes and their effects are by no means spent; and why have we not a right to look forward to the same process of expanding enfranchisement going on hereafter, and with redoubled vigour, which has been going on since the passing of the Reform Act. MR. GLADSTONE said he did not wish to see the working class in a majority among the electors. He cared little for himself, but he had a regard for his weaker brethren, and, therefore, gave up the 6*l.* borough franchise, which would have produced 428,000 electors, for a 7*l.* franchise, which produced 330,000. But not limiting ourselves to the present, what are the prospects with regard to the constituencies? What chance is there that the principle now enounced will remain inviolate? Is it not, on the contrary, certain that in a few years the working men will be, from the causes I have mentioned, the majority. When Government propose a 7*l.* franchise, encouragement is given to turn a 6*l.* house into a 7*l.* house. An immense amount of expansion will take place in that way, and in a short time we shall see the working classes in a majority in the constituencies. I have had opportunities of knowing some of the constituencies of this country: and I ask, if you want venality, ignorance, drunkenness, and intimidation; if you want impulsive, unreflecting, violent people, where would you go to look for them—to the top or to the bottom? It is ridiculous to blink the fact that, since the Reform Act, the

great corruption has been among the voters between 20*l.* and 10*l.* rental, the 10*l.* lodging-house and beer-house keepers. Some honourable gentlemen are like the ancients, who thought the Hyperboreans were perfectly warm, because they lived beyond the north wind, when they think that if they only get a little below the 10*l.* franchise they will discover a perfectly virtuous standard. The question then becomes exceedingly simple, what sort of persons live in these small houses? We have long had experience of them under the name of "freemen"; and it would be a good thing if they were disfranchised altogether. They were dying out of themselves; but Government propose to bring them back again under another name. What good will the country at large get by this reduction of the franchise? A large addition to every constituency from that class to which we always look, if there be anything wrong going on. It will greatly increase the expense of canvassing, of elections, of electioneering. The working men, finding themselves in a clear majority, will unite to carry their own objects. When we shall have a Parliament appointed by these deteriorated constituencies, what do you expect Parliament will stop at? Parliamentary life would not be worth preserving. Look at the position Parliament will occupy. While we have not passed this Bill, we are masters of the situation. Let us pass the Bill, and we become mere Gibeonites—hewers of wood and drawers of water—rescued for a moment from slaughter, that we may prepare the Bill for re-distribution, with a threat hanging over us that, if we don't do the work, we shall be sent about our business, and make way for another Parliament.

Another feature in this Bill is, that it is merely a franchise Bill, and does not deal with re-distribution. In so framing it, Government have acted on advice given by MR. BRIGHT. That gentleman in 1859 expressed totally opposite views; but I can believe him consistent all the while, for I believe he does desire, as the great thing needful, a re-distribution of seats; but he doubts if he would obtain now such a re-distribution as he wants, and therefore, like a good workman, he says, "Let us make the tools first, and then we shall speedily construct the machine." Those tools are the House to be created by the present Bill, brought in at his own instance, excluding the re-distribution until an assembly much more democratic than the present can be brought together. We shall have an opportunity of considering the

[Lowe.]

Bill on the second reading, and I earnestly hope that honourable gentlemen will weigh what I have said. And remember, there is another principle assumed throughout MR. GLADSTONE'S speech; that you cannot possibly make constituencies too large, so long as you don't put flagrantly improper people into them: that is, I believe, a mistake. It is quite possible to make constituencies so large as to deter from sitting in this House men of moderate opinions and moderate means; so large as to divide the representation between millionaires, to whom expense is of no moment, and demagogues, who compensate for want of money by pandering to popular passions. This House has not merely to represent the people; it has also, under our happy constitution, to form that school of statesmanship through which politicians must pass to the Executive Government. By forming your House solely with a view to members and representation you destroy the element out of which your statesmen must be made. The Reform Bill of 1832 has greatly invigorated our legislation, but it may be a question whether it has been equally efficient in invigorating our Executive Government.

And, now, I will ask, what reason can possibly be alleged—the Government has given us none—for bringing in this Bill at all? Is it demanded out of doors? Has there been any energy in the demand for such a franchise? Have any petitions been presented for this Bill. I hear that four have been presented. Is it from the constituencies the pressure comes? Lord Russell himself declares that selfishness in the constituencies shuts out the working men. The constituencies then, clearly, do not want reform. Is it from this House? The same noble Lord, in answer to a deputation, said, "I anticipate the greatest difficulty from the House of Commons." Lastly, is it from the Cabinet? Here again I call upon Lord Russell, for MR. BRIGHT has asserted that he found that noble Lord as ardent as possible for Reform, but with immense difficulties to deal with in his Cabinet.

[MR. BRIGHT denied the utterance of the speech imputed to him.]

What I have quoted I read in the "Star," which I take in when I want information about the honourable member. It is said that it is in deference to public opinion this Bill is brought in. I have shown that it is not because the working man is excluded. MR. GLADSTONE says members on both sides are committed to Reform. Now, I apprehend that every

(Love.)

gentleman entering this House does so, not as Member for any particular borough or county, but as a representative of the whole country, and with an obligation, which no promise can alter, that he will to the best of his ability do his duty to the country. Then, if a gentleman by pledges has got into a situation incompatible with honour, he should get out of it. If he remain in it, he will be in that position described by one of our greatest poets,

"His honour in dishonour rooted stood,
And faith unfaithful made him falsely true."

I have little to add in respect of the reasons for introducing this measure. The plan is to assume that there are reasons. Bring in the Bill; *solvitur ambulando*; let it walk by itself. You seldom hear a gentleman argue from the beginning so as to show why we should have Reform at all. I don't now say we should not have it; but I say you should not deal with the franchise as if it were prize-money you were going to distribute. When the common people are told there is anything to be got, they think that as in the administration of justice, there should be equality for all; they think that Government ought to distribute everything equally as among co-partners. But that is not the understanding of the duties of a Government. Government does not deal with justice, it deals with expediency. The object is to construct the best machinery for the purpose to which it is to be applied, and in doing so we may violate any law of symmetry, equality, or distributive justice. The real object of this Bill being to alter the constitution of, and re-distribute power in, this House, I think Government ought to commence by examining the state of the House, wherein it has succeeded, and wherein it has failed. Then improve the good, if they can, and remedy the bad. Government not having taken this trouble, but having rather mixed their drugs, without looking at their patient, let us try for ourselves that difficult thing "to see ourselves as others see us." I think we may say without self-praise, that this House holds—not only in England, but throughout the world—a position far above that held by any other deliberative assembly which ever existed. It is more respected all over the world; its debates are more read; and they exercise more influence on mankind than those of assemblies infinitely more popular. I may go further and say that it has discharged its principal functions—those of finance—with greater success than any other deliberative

(Lowe)

assembly. Of course it is not perfect: nothing human is. I know there is a clamour that the poor man is not represented in this House; but can any one say that the interests of the poor are neglected here. I will not say what this House has done in legislation: I said it last year, and I will not repeat it. This House is also one of the most orderly of deliberative assemblies: it is independent, free from corruption, industrious. These are great merits. Will the Government proposal leave all these things as it finds them? As the polypus takes its colour from the rock to which it fixes, so do the members of this House take their character from the constituencies. If you lower the constituencies, you lower the representatives, you lower the character of the House. You will find that result in all the assemblies of Australia and North America. But this House, like all human institutions, possesses imperfections, and I will point out one or two of them. A great change, operating in various ways since 1832, is that the House is much nearer its constituencies and much more influenced by them. Formerly there was a great gulf between a man and his constituency; now by railway and telegraph they can communicate with their members, and it has happened before now, that in the course of a debate a member's vote has been changed by instructions from his supporters. This is the less to be regretted, who have not heard all the arguments, correcting the better informed, who has. Would more democratic constituencies be more or less tolerant of the adverse opinions of their honest and able representative who does not follow their whim of the moment? Then, once more, there is the relation between this House and the Executive Government. Working together they are invaluable: the House derives support from having a Government to lead it, and seeks of dignity and power from being able to interrogate the Ministers of the Crown, the fountains of all political information. Ministers sit in this House and are a part of it: they and it gain infinitely by contact with each other, and anything tending to sever the connexion between them must be dangerous and most mischievous. The first Reform Bill, how successful soever in legislation, has not been equally so in this matter. It had been painful to observe the growing weakness of the Executive. Formerly motions for papers or inquiry would be resisted and refused if inexpedient; but what Minister now ventured to refuse? The whole machinery of Government has fallen too much

into the hands of this House, and, if the process continues, the result must be to transfer the responsibility from Ministers to the House of Commons. These things are matters of very serious importance. You know that the wise men who founded the Constitution of America foresaw that, with its democratic foundation, it would be absolutely impossible to have the English system; so they established a system under which the Executive Government and the Legislature should exist for a different period of years, and should be elected by different authorities, in order that they might have no point of contact with each other. The feebleness which that quality imparted to the Executive and Legislature in America may be seen in the discord now likely to break out between the head of the Executive and the Legislature. Now that was a state of things which could not exist for a moment in this country. If the House means to retain its influence over the Executive, it must beware of putting itself on too democratic a base. In proportion as it does it will lose the power of working the existing system, until at last it will be driven, as Australia and other Colonies have been driven, to appoint the Executive for a number of years certain, whether in harmony or not with the Legislature. Now with America and Australia as examples before us, is it wise to push forward in the same direction?

Then, again, elections become day by day more expensive. I refer, of course, to legitimate expenses. It is not difficult to account for this. A torrent of wealth is flowing into the country, and persons naturally seek a seat in this House, for purposes political or non-political. There are, for instance, representatives of great companies and great interests, and gentlemen wishing to get into society under the stimulus of their wives and daughters. This is a serious matter, because it is only through this House the most important members of Government can enter the Government, and if you require in addition to the immense labour and vicissitudes of public life, that aspirants for office shall expend more in conciliating electors than they will receive from the public, you will make public life impossible to the class of men which you wish to have. How long will the small boroughs exist with a democratic constitution? Those small boroughs about which Mr. GLADSTONE made so eloquent a speech in 1859, and which sent to Parliament such men as Chatham, Pitt, Fox, Canning, and Peel. And

how, sir, if these boroughs are thrown away, will you supply their places? Unless, like the American Congress, you desire to dissolve your connection with the Executive altogether, it is necessary that these be kept up, or other means devised to bring about the same result. Then there is the private business of this House, when we are supposed to be investigating the schemes of people who have raised capital to carry them out, whereas often they are schemes got up by people with no capital at all, in order that they may sell the approval of this House on the Stock Exchange. Then, again, there are other affairs equally unpleasant, such as Government subsidies of different kinds. I wish an end could be put to these things; but do you think that by lowering the franchise you will redress any of these evils? Is it one, for instance, looking at America, that democratic institutions render people jealous of the moral character of their representatives? I believe that while the Government Bill now proposed, would fail to alleviate any of these evils, there is another [illegible] in our present constitution, which it would tend enormously to abate. Let Government tell us what is the [illegible] of the House of Commons, and how the [illegible] these faults, rather than fling the [illegible] and say that we must adopt it, without [illegible] for or against a state of things which has existed [illegible] happily. It has been said that precisely the same arguments have been used now as in 1832. Now all arguments against Reform in 1832 were excellent, only they did not conform to the facts of the case. Is the present instance in the same category? The controversy in 1832 was perfectly defined. Did the system then existing work well or not? The country decided, I think very rightly, that it did not. But that is not the controversy now. The point in dispute is, admitting the system to work well, are we not still to alter it? Again, the grievance [illegible] in 1832 was a practical grievance.

[illegible] grievance now but a theoretical grievance [illegible] any settlement of the question? Why, if [illegible] this Bill alone could be settled this session, it would then be argued over again next session. Then [illegible] Bills for Scotland and Ireland; then [illegible] Distribution Bills; then a Boundary Bill; then a Registration Bill; and lastly, an Anti-corruption Bill. Thus the settlement promised is really a revision of our whole electoral system in a series of nine difficult Bills. Sup-

posing the Bills are passed, as they will be passed, if at all, in deference to mere numbers at the expense of property and intelligence; in deference to democratic passion, disguised under a love of symmetry and equality, till you will have inequalities enough to stir the question anew. The grievances being theoretical, and not practical, will survive so long as practice does not conform to theory, and practice will never conform to theory until you have universal suffrage and equal electoral districts. I say, therefore, there is no element of finality in this measure, and I shall guide my own vote with reference to its influence on the good or bad working of the House of Commons, and not with reference to any theories about the ideal of good government." Well, the right honourable gentleman who had not time to give us a reason for introducing the Bill, found time to give us a quotation, and it was a question of a very serious kind, because, not finding in the whole classical repertory any quotation that would exactly describe the state of perfect bliss to which his Bill would introduce us, he was induced to take the exact contrary and make a quotation to show us what his Bill was not.

"Scandit fatales machina muros,
Foeta armis."

"The engine," and that," he added, "is not my Bill." Well, that was a very apt quotation, but there was a curious infelicity about it which he little dreamt of. The House remembers that among other proofs of the degree in which public opinion is enlisted in the cause of Reform was this,—that this is now the fifth Reform Bill that has been brought in since 1851. Now, just attend to the sequel of the passage quoted by the right honourable gentleman. I am no believer in omens, Sir, and the House will see why in a moment:—

"Divum domos illum et hostes
Mentis quadrifidum per artes
Aeneas arcem scandit, nec fallitur heros."

But that is not all—

"Instat turba Phrygum in mediosque ad limina ductum
Ilia ingens comitum stipatur agmina centum."

Well, I abominate the passage contained in the last two lines, but I like the confidence with fear. The events of the next Parliament are hidden in the future. It may be that they will take that advice tendered with so much eloquence and authority by my right honourable friend. It may

be that we are de[illegible] to avoid this enormous danger. But it may be otherwise [illegible] all I can say is, that if my right honourable friend does succeed in carrying this measure through Parliament, when the passions and interests of the day are gone by, I do not envy his retrospect. I covet not a single leaf of the laurels that may encircle his brow. I do not envy him his triumph. His be the glory of carrying it; mine be the glory of having, to the utmost of my possibility, resisted it.

The Right Honourable CHARLES PELHAM VILLIERS.—I think we ought to endeavour to regard ourselves as the world regards us. The view taken outside of this House is not one of trust or confidence in the sentiments of Members who speak upon these questions. It is notorious that the subject we are now discussing is one on which the House of Commons is not trusted. Wherever you go it is a common belief that this Bill will be thrown out by the House because its object is to reform the House itself. Mr. Lowe says that Mr. GLADSTONE gave no reason for [illegible] measure. Yet he gave a reason which was founded on the honour, morality, and respectability of every one of those Ministers who have at different times advised Her Majesty that the representation required amendment. Mr. Lowe's [illegible] the change now proposed is the more remarkable, because in 1869 he spoke in favour of which he said that no Reform would be satisfactory which did not reduce the franchise. All the evils in the management of this House, all the wild statements made at public meetings, are [illegible] against a reduction of the franchise. [illegible] democracy, and he regards with [illegible] anything tending to increase the [illegible] What has he been doing him[illegible] doing? What levels the [illegible] What are the greatness and [illegible] of one side of station and [illegible] at has he been trying to do? [illegible] the people. Why does he [illegible] Ulster men in this House [illegible] chance of all the relations of [illegible] classes. The next thing [illegible] the removal of the restraints [illegible] resisted that removal. Those [illegible] The people have now more [illegible] they ever had before. When

[Villiers.]

is the evidence of their bad intentions? Where are their public speeches against the Crown, the Church, the House of Lords, and other institutions of the country? Who will not say that our institutions are more secure, in proportion as the people have become free and intelligent, and believe that more justice has been done to them? Lord Russell had said that in 1832 the franchise was placed higher than the then Government considered necessary. It is not a secret that Mr. LOWE and Mr. WALPOLE were both in favour of an 8*l.* franchise; and yet the former entertains all these terrors and alarms about our proposed 7*l.* one. To show how far evil predictions on these subjects are verified, I can quote passages from the speeches of Lord Kingsdown, the late Sir Robert Inglis, Mr. Croker, and Sir John Malcolm on the great Reform Act, showing the terrible results that were expected from that event, and how signally such predictions have failed. Now, in contrast to these unfulfilled prophesies I can quote what, in 1832, fell from another hon. Member for Calne. I mean Lord Macaulay, who said, among other pertinent things, that "he did not support that Bill because he thought that democratic institutions were best for all ages and all countries, but because he thought that a more popular constitution than that which then existed in this country, and in the then age, would produce good government." I agree with those authorities who say that we ought to be guided by the consideration of what is suitable for our time and country. The people do not deserve the slurs Mr. LOWE has cast upon them. Everybody knows what sufferings have been borne, with the greatest patience and fortitude, by the people of Lancashire under the sore trial of the cotton famine. That excellent behaviour was partly attributable to their superior knowledge (as compared with the upper classes) of the merits of the American war question. Nothing could induce them to swerve from the absolute principle of neutrality, and they were ready deliberately to undergo any suffering rather than that the Government should intervene in that great contest. I do not think there is any good ground for saying that this measure is too narrow in its scope, and ought to be more comprehensive in character. On four distinct occasions a measure comprehending too much has been brought in, and failed. I know of nothing opposed to precedent in introducing a measure not in itself complete. Parliamentary Reform has been treated during the last fifteen years in its

Villiers.]

separate branches. We have had separate Bills for England, Scotland, and Ireland; by a distinct Act the property qualification for members was changed, by another abolished. There has been one Act on registration, one on the rating of compound householders, another on the period of polling, another on the polling places, another for the punishment of corruption; by a distinct Act Sudbury and St. Alban's were disfranchised; by another, the Representatives of Yorkshire and Lancashire increased. MR. LAING did not, like MR. LOWE, deprecate all Reform action; but considered that we ought to deal with the re-distribution of seats first. Well, that is a nice question, and altogether of policy. Every great measure yet brought forward has met with similar violent opposition; and often the very men thus [illegible]ously opposing have themselves been advocates of the measure on a subsequent occasion. Are honourable Members aware what rejecting this measure really signifies? Is it that the people must resort to other than constitutional means? We have the power now of passing a measure which the people of this country will accept, though not all that they desire.

MR. R. N. PHILLIPS.—I come to this House not by reason of pledges, but because my constituents, among whom my life has been passed, believe that I shall uphold their rights. Viewing the difficulty of passing any measure of Reform through this House, I thank the Government for their proposal, which, if passed, will add a large number of people to the franchise. Under it my electors in Bury will be raised from 1,300 by an addition of 400; and I shall feel my position strengthened by representing so increased a number. I also thank the Government for their dealing with the county franchise, which, though some would have preferred a 10*l.* franchise, is both bold and fair.

MR. LEATHAM.—Taken as a whole, I believe the Bill will give great satisfaction, and it will have my hearty support, as I am convinced it will meet with the approval of the industrious, loyal, and contented people of this country. I have always wished to see the working classes fairly represented; and I am quite content with the proposed addition of 144,000 to the electoral roll. Had the measure gone further there might have been a difficulty in dealing with them, owing to their large numbers. There were mistakes in the computation of the working men said to be now enfranchised, as many were wrongly included as working

men who, although working themselves, were actually employers of labour. I protest against the time of the House being occupied, as last night, by personal attacks; members who have sat long in the House should set a better example to the new members.

MR. ARTHUR W. PEEL.—The opponents of the Bill array themselves into three classes. The first, under Mr. Lowe, contend for "No franchise under 10*l.*," but in reality object to any extension of the franchise at all. A second class oppose the Bill because it does not go far enough. While the third class of opponents hold that it is not sufficiently comprehensive. Now, had I had the framing of the Bill, I would have had a 10*l.* franchise in counties and a 6*l.* franchise in boroughs; but that is not reason enough to induce me to oppose the whole Bill. As regards the boroughs I shall be content with the 7*l.* rental franchise as a settlement of the question for years to come. The redistribution of seats and the machinery of elections demand, however, speedy legislation. My borough (Warwick) illustrates the decrease of the proportion of working men in the franchise, as pointed out by MR. GLADSTONE. In 1832 the electors were 1,300, now there are but 760, yet the population has increased from 9,000 to 10,000. An objection raised to admitting the working classes to the franchise on the ground that it is the thin edge of the wedge, which would lead to absolute democracy, is a fallacy; for it presupposes that the working men move as one great and united body. In canvassing Coventry in 1862, amid great social distress, I found the greatest diversity of political opinion among the electors, as great as between the Ministry and the Opposition, and yet 70 per cent. of them belonged to the working classes. I am convinced that the working classes are as capable of exercising the suffrage honestly and independently as any that now possess it. Looking to the substantial merits of the Bill, I will adopt every means to promote its success.

MR. ALLEN.—The Bill meets the general approval of honourable Members on the Ministerial side of the House, and doubtless of the great mass of the people of the country. The simple question is, Shall we trust the people or shall we not? Mr. LOWE thinks not. In my borough (Newcastle-under-Lyme), working men constitute 60 per cent. of the electoral body, and during my canvass I was astonished at the intelligence, political knowledge, and good conduct they

displayed. The experience of the last few months has convinced me that there is, on the part of the working classes, a deep-settled determination to have their just rights; and unless this Bill be passed, Parliament will soon be compelled, by irresistible force, to pass a more sweeping measure.

MR. SCHREIBER.—I must ask for more figures. The Government have gone to rate-books in quest of political wisdom which was from below. I now invite them to a little upward research. I appeal to Members on both sides of the House, whether we are not lamentably ignorant of the constitution of our present constituencies? Do we know where the real power now resides? The history of 1852 would suggest that the political masters lived in houses rented at less than 20*l.*, but we have no certain information. Such information would now possess an important practical bearing. It is impossible to estimate the effect of proposed changes without knowing the precise analysis of the present constituency. I desire also to know in what proportion the voters on the existing register are assessed to property and income-tax. Until this information be given, I must adhere to the opinion that the House has been invited to approach the question upon most inadequate and imperfect knowledge.

MR. LONG.—The measure is incomplete and unsatisfactory. In former measures, as in 1859, an educational franchise was included, but none now. There is no step taken to re-arrange the limits of boroughs, so as to make the constituents within them fairer samples of the various classes of the community. The Bill is either a sham or a reality. If a sham, it is unworthy of support from any quarter; if a reality, it can only form part of a great scheme, which the House should have before it in its entirety. I protest against this presentation of a mere instalment; and, as a measure tending to interfere prejudicially with institutions of which this House is the guardian, I am opposed to its provisions.

MR. MELLER.—I do not think it well that institutions, which have stood the test of time, should be lightly abandoned; nor, so far as I can see, is there now any good reason for the proposed change. I have heard of no grievance with which the House, as now constituted, is incompetent to deal. Would an extension of the franchise have prevented Fenianism? I believe that fully 26 per cent. of the working

classes are now represented, and that the electoral system, despite some anomalies, fairly reflects the national interests. MR. GLADSTONE called the 14*l.* occupation franchise in counties a middle class enfranchisement; but I doubt if these 14*l.* voters would have much sympathy with land, while the leasehold and copyhold tenures would be biassed rather by borough than county influences. As to the savings bank franchise, as an advocate of provident prudence, I cannot see why the claims of those with money in the funds should be ignored. The proposal that a man paying 4*s.* a week for lodgings should obtain the franchise, I consider a most democratic and revolutionary measure. I myself possess some flats let out in the way described, and so far from being occupied by the middle classes, they are entirely occupied by artizans. Assuming that the tendency of all these contemplated changes is democratic, democracy we know leads not to liberty, but to its very opposite. I should welcome to the constituency the proposed new comers did I not consider that they would disturb the equilibrium of the State. MR. GLADSTONE bids us not to be alarmed, and alludes to the wooden horse. I answer in few words—

Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.

"MR. ACLAND.—I regret that some professed Liberals have stabbed the Government measure from the rear. I was a follower of the late Sir Robert Peel, but my convictions have moved on. During eighteen years' absence from Parliament I have studied the unrepresented classes. This matter should not now be trifled with by friend or foe. We shall be safe in trusting the people, and this House will fail in its duty unless it ally itself with popular sympathies, and give the working classes that increased representation to which their intelligence and education entitle them. I think the Bill is a fair measure of relief to the working class, but I regret that it includes none of the "fancy" franchises. I should have been pleased to see a franchise created in connection with provident societies and benefit clubs. I think education, well used, should be a qualification. The lodger franchise is good. I consider the measure, on the whole, a reasonable solution of one important branch of Reform.

The Right Honourable JAMES WHITESIDE.—The no-principle of this Bill is beginning to be understood, and when Mr. ACLAND said he would leave it to be discussed by the Opposition he forgot that the debate has been carried on

by gentlemen on the Ministerial side, scarcely an observation having been made by us on a motion, which we are of course anxious to discuss, but which we naturally suppose must be best understood by gentlemen on the Ministerial side. No one has risen on the Treasury bench since Mr. GLADSTONE, except Mr. VILLIERS, who has shown in what thorough contempt he holds the British constitution. What does he mean by it being the first duty of the House to fix the number of voters and then to distribute members among them? Is it that we are to upset everything in the country? However, Mr. VILLIERS' speech seemed to come more from the scissors than the head. What is the use of quoting speeches made forty years ago? It would be better for present Ministers to prove the necessity on present grounds for their proposed measure. I deny that Members on this side of the House are opposed to an extension of the franchise, but we are opposed to a measure of this nature—unsettling everything and settling nothing. I recollect MR. BAINES' Franchise Bill, which MR. GLADSTONE complimented, and then recommended to be withdrawn. I would ask MR. LOCKE KING what sort of support Lord Palmerston gave his 10*l.* county franchise. The noble lord's speech in reference to that subject was a charming example of the way in which a politic Minister could say obliging things to the honourable gentleman and then snuff him out. That is the sort of support the Cabinet have given for four or five years to earnest men who brought forward measures of reform. I am not impressed with the sincerity of Ministers who pursue that course. MR. GLADSTONE works practically with the Rule of Three, and does with figures what he pleases. I distrust his figures very much. When supporting MR. BAINES' bill, he asserted as a fact "that the influences of the working classes was almost infinitesimal in the franchise of the country." It now appears that the working classes represent 26 per cent. of the borough constituency, and MR. LOWE has shown, in a speech which has not been answered, that the causes which have operated to give the working classes such a share now do and must continue to operate to increase it. To say that a sufficient number of working men are represented, but are unequally distributed over the country, is to prove nothing, because our system of representation never was that men should be equally represented all over the country. MR. LAING'S speech was wise, politic, and constitutional. He proved to demonstration

that if the inequalities of the electoral system demanded that the settlement of 1832 should be reopened, the inequalities in the representation of particular boroughs, cities, and counties, were far greater than any inequalities in the electoral body itself. Is it true that Ministers could not bring in a complete measure? If not, it proves either Ministerial imbecility or Ministerial dishonesty. To show that the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER has not the least atom of foundation for what he has said, I will recall the scope of the Reform Bill introduced in 1859 by Lord Derby's Government. Now the whole nine questions held before us for future torture are all disposed of in it, including enfranchisement and disfranchisement. I would remind Mr. LAING that Honiton, the borough he mentioned, was dealt with. That Bill proposed to favour Birkenhead and Staleybridge; to divide the West Riding into three divisions, and Middlesex into two. It provided complete systems of registration and polling, and disposed of the whole question of the right of voting. Thus all the points introduced by Mr. GLADSTONE with such pomp as subjects for nine separate measures were disposed of in one Bill, which Lord Russell helped to strangle. No one can believe that it would have been impossible now to introduce a complete measure. It is given us in fragments in deference to Mr. BRIGHT. I believe in that gentleman's sincerity, and never more than when he remarked that there are three things to be done. First, to get an extension of the franchise, and rest awhile; next, the ballot; and after that, a re-distribution of seats. The design is the thing to look to: if it were accomplished we should be to all purposes a democracy. I do not mean that the form of the Constitution would be abolished; but that the entire power of the State would be lodged in this House; the House of Lords would be a pleasant so-so sort of a place; the Crown, a myth.

I have something to say on the 40*s.* franchise. Lord Derby's Bill proposed to abolish the county votes of 40*s.* freeholders in boroughs, on the ground that those who lived in counties should vote for the counties alone, and those in boroughs for the boroughs alone. What was the 40*s.* franchise when created? 40*s.* in that day were worth as much as 40*l.* now. In olden times they had no idea of a man having a vote unless he had sufficient property to insure an interest in the stability of the country. And now it is proposed to aggravate the anomaly which time has produced in this originally

sound arrangement. I do not know what is intended for Ireland, but presume it is to lower the franchise. At present we have a good constituency in the 8*l.* rating in boroughs and 12*l.* rating in counties. The Scotch representation is also left in obscurity.

The belief that these measures can be taken *seriatim* seems most unphilosophical, when we consider how delicate a subject is the constitution of the country. I defy any man to tell the result of adding 400,000 to the present constituency; yet we are invited to introduce them first, and then ascertain the consequences. That seems impolitic, unless we at the same time deal with the re-distribution. Giving the working classes the franchise will not elevate them. They must elevate themselves as others have done: and we must hold out the franchise above them as an inducement to raise themselves to its standard. I am satisfied that the constitution of this country stands on a sound and satisfactory basis, and I hope that this Parliament will prove themselves the faithful, wise, and fearless guardians of the blessings which we now enjoy.

MR. FAWCETT.—If, in the least degree, I represent the working classes, I am happy to say that I accept this measure thankfully, and will do all in my power to give it a most cordial support. The arguments and reasoning of MR. LOWE, acute and profound though they be, will fail to convince me, and influence the country, unless he can answer me one question—did not he join the combination which declared that no Government was worthy the confidence of this country, unless it reduced the borough franchise? That combination was a factious one, based on insincerity. Also did not Mr. LOWE become a Member of the Government which came into power expressly for the purpose of carrying an extension of the suffrage? In 1860, did not the Right Hon. Gentleman acquiesce by his silence in a measure wider than the present one proposed? Did he less know then the evils of the course? He had then, as now, read his *Bentham*, and his Aristotle; had seen Australia and witnessed the democracy of that country. Now, within the last four years an event had occurred, in itself a more unanswerable argument in favour of the suffrage than fifty volumes of statistics. An important branch of industry has been paralyzed; an important section of our labouring population reduced from comparative affluence to the depths of destitution and distress. They had shown no deficiency in social virtue; but

a manly independence. It had been said that the Lancashire operatives would rise, and insist upon the raising of the blockade; but they nobly preferred and bore all their misfortunes rather than that the evils of slavery should be continued. 'Mr. MARSH has bid us look at Australia! Do so, and see the results of democracy. Had I been there, as the Hon. Member has been, and met with great pecuniary success; if I knew, as he knows, that property in that country was as secure, and the laws as well and justly administered as at home; I should know better than to speak of the people as if they were a nation of bandits. Look to Australia with its popular institutions? Why, Australia does not yield even to this country in its loyalty to our beloved Queen. The people there are free, happy, and wealthy; and have not, as we have, a burden of destitution to support. Now, Mr. LAING and Mr. LOWE said plainly that wherever in a constituency there were most working men, there also was most bribery. I do not represent a small borough, but a peculiarly working man's constituency. Mr. LOWE has also said that if the working men were increased, it would be impossible for any but a rich man to get into the House. I am averse to entering on personal history; but I feel bound to give evidence upon this subject. I went to the borough I now represent an unknown man, without a single friend. I told the electors at once that I was an exceedingly poor man; that I could not afford to employ a single paid agent or canvasser; that all my income was obtained by intellectual exertion in a fair, open field. I have not promised to subscribe a single shilling to any of their institutions, and the only pledge I gave was that I would give up my whole time and energies to the discharge of my Parliamentary duties. There were 2,000 working men in Brighton, and nine-tenths of that body, or more, voted for me on the terms I have stated. Now, I will challenge Mr. LAING, a gentleman having great commercial eminence, and doubtless vast wealth, to go down to Brighton and squander his gold; but, as long as I do my duty, I defy him to shake the humblest, lowest, poorest man who voted in my favour.

It is frequently stated that the working classes, if admitted to the franchise, would overwhelm every other class by voting *en masse*. Why should they so vote? On questions which affect them, the working classes are as much divided in opinion as any other classes. It is a mistake to suppose

that every Hon. gentleman, who professed to represent peculiarly the working classes, was admired or trusted by them. With what favour would those who desire an extension of the Factory Act look upon Mr. BRIGHT, and members like him, who had opposed the passing of those Acts? I think those who call for a complete measure of Reform do so because they are not very anxious for any measure of Reform at all. Finally, I welcome a Bill which adds to the electors 400,000 independent, intelligent, patriotic men.

MR. BRIGHT.—Although during this debate the subject of much unusual attack, I have not risen to defend myself, for I leave my course in this House, and my political character, to the impartial view of Members, and the just judgment of my countrymen outside. Nor do I rise to defend the Bill, but to explain what I understand it to be, and the grounds upon which it appeals to us for support. What it proposes to do it does distinctly, and without tricks, not giving in one clause and withdrawing in another. Every admirer of the Bill of 1832 should support that part of the Bill which removes the legal obstacles by which many intended to have been enfranchised in 1832 have up to this time been deprived of their votes. The Reform Act proposed to give a vote to every 10*l.* occupier of a house in a borough. Owing partly to the wording of the Act, partly to the decisions of judges and courts, this extension of the franchise was never complete; and by the operation of clauses which made it necessary that the occupier should himself pay rates, many thousands will have been disfranchised to this hour. With regard to the county franchise, I think the Government have displayed great feebleness. While reducing the franchise they should not have stopped at 14*l.*, but should go down to 10*l.* Lord STANLEY and Mr. DISRAELI brought in a Reform Bill containing some good and some bad things; and one of its propositions was a 10*l.* county franchise. They believed, and no doubt believe now, that 10*l.* is a proper franchise for counties in England and Wales, and I shall be glad to see them consistent by proposing in Committee to alter this 14*l.* to 10*l.* Many of us in this part of the House will give them our most cordial support. I can promise, too, that Mr. LOWE will go with them, for he has fixed his affection on a 10*l.* franchise, and if he approve that sum for a borough he can hardly deny it to the county, where the 10*l.* householder is usually in better circumstances than in the borough. Again, I have heard from Irish members that a 12*l.* rating franchise (equiva-

lent I presume to a 14*l.* rental franchise) works well in Irish counties. We then come to the only point on which there can be difference of opinion, and I think the world has never seen before an assembly of 500 or 600 intelligent gentlemen so excite themselves over the simple question whether the franchise in boroughs shall remain at 10*l.* or be fixed for a time at 7*l.* I should be very happy if the working classes could surmount this barrier of 7*l.*, and if that should ultimately be found equal to a household suffrage. But can any gentleman suppose that this or any such measure can be final? We must have a poor notion of what our children will be, if we think that they will not be as able to decide the future of this question as we are its present.

In addition, the Bill proposes a lodger or tenement occupation franchise. Mr. DISRAELI proposed something of the same kind, but fixed the amount at 20*l.*, while this Bill makes it 10*l.*, being nearly the same for a holding of that kind that 7*l.* would be for a house. Some one has said, and many have written, that this Bill is my Bill, and that the Government have adopted a Bill on my recommendation. Now, I cannot find a point in this Bill which is as I recommended. I never was in favour of a 6*l.* franchise, and should never have proposed it. I believe in a household franchise for the boroughs of this country. A 7*l.* franchise is a proposition which I never said one syllable in favour of, and it never entered my mind that Government would split hairs in this fashion. But, now here it is offered, and unfortunate beggars in the House, as outside it, cannot be choosers. Government have been splitting hairs between 6*l.* and 7*l.*; I hope the Opposition will not split hairs between 7*l.* and 8*l.*, to which latter figure Mr. HENLEY and Mr. WALPOLE are, I believe, attached; for considering the expectation of the country it would be very ungracious in them not to concede the 1*l.*, in answer to the concession of 1*l.* that I make.

Mr. LOWE regards the 10*l.* franchise as the salvation of the country. I do not know whether he would think 9*l.* perilous, or 8*l.* of doubtful utility; but a 7*l.* franchise he regards as actually destructive of the institutions of the country. I never knew a more appalling and gloomy picture of the condition of this House and of the country that that Hon Member drew, and the whole foundation is that Government propose to introduce a franchise into boroughs 1*l.* lower than that recommended by Messrs. WALPOLE and HENLEY. If gentlemen opposite make it impossible to get this suffrage

[Bright.]

question out of the way during the present session, I think they will live to regret the course they have taken.

There is one other proposition—the savings-bank franchise. I think that Mr. DISRAELI had something like it in his Bill. Now I conscientiously think that such a franchise is the very worst of all the fancy franchises that ever were proposed. It is unequal in the last degree and, besides, the source of every kind of fraud. I agree with Mr. LAING, who asked why 50*l.* in a savings bank should give a better position than an equal sum fairly invested in any kind of property. For many a good action a man may have to withdraw 5*l.* and lose his vote, while the less heroic man would retain his money and his vote. It will lead to great frauds, because the members of a family will enter their money in the name of one member of it, in order to give him a vote.

I have now gone through the Bill and I ask Hon. Members what they think of it? Mr. GLADSTONE tells us that in England and Wales there are 5,500,000 grown men, and that under this Bill there will be 1,300,000 electors. It will leave 4,000,000 grown men without the franchise; of those he says 330,000 will be working men. This I think an exaggerated statement, for he includes 60,000 who now live in 10*l.* houses and, moreover, every occupier between 10*l.* and 7*l.* There is no one in this House who has not been astonished to hear how many working men there are said to be in the present constituency. Half this statement is a delusion of the most transparent kind. I know from experience that in a good many boroughs it is so.

In 1859, I find Mr. LOWE, in an election speech, saying that it was "the duty of Government to prepare a measure of Reform."—The right hon. gentleman has a very short memory, or else he trifles with the House. Is it conceivable that the man who so spoke in 1859, can have made such a speech as we have just heard? Has absence from office produced this curious effect? I don't complain that men are so fond of office, though I cannot understand why they should be. But if I may be allowed to parody one or two lines of the stanza in one of the most beautiful poems in our language, I might ask—

> "For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
> That pleasing, anxious office e'er resigned,
> Left the warm precincts of the Treasury,
> Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?"

What I do complain of—and it is a fair complaint—is this that

when place recedes into the somewhat dim past, that which when they were in office was deemed patriotism vanishes with it. Now Mr. LOWE, who had his head broken at Kidderminster, left that place and went to Calne, a village somewhere in the West of England, where he found 174 electors, about seven of whom were working men.—Now the tumult there was worse in a legal point of view even than at Kidderminster, for the mob of that little village shut the police force up in the Town-Hall and had the whole game in their own hands. Mr. LOWE's nominal constituency is those 174 electors; but his real constituency is one Member of the House of Parliament, who could have sent here his butler or his groom. Now, let us not take the disparaging view of our countrymen offered by Mr. LOWE and Mr. MARSH, who, perhaps from their associations at the Antipodes, seem to take only a Botany Bay view of the subject. Now, is it not inconceivably better to show trust in the people; for of all the follies, all the crimes, which individuals commit, that of constant distrust of their fellow subjects, of all the citizens of the country, is about the wildest and most foolish. The Duke of Wellington had defied the Reform agitation of his time: three days after—fearless and honest, as he was—he had to resign. The statesmen of the time of Charles I upheld household suffrage. Lord Somers maintained later that by birth every Englishman was entitled to a vote. Now, if this Bill be rejected, you will show that you are against all Reform; whereas, if it passes you will show that you are not cut off altogether from sympathy with your people. Unless you moderate your views with regard to the great bulk of the working classes, you will find your country gradually weakened by a constantly increasing emigration; for working men know the advantages, social and political, of colonial and American life. I give the Bill my support; because, as far as it goes, it is a simple and honest measure, and because I believe that, if it becomes law, it will give some solidity and duration to everything that is good in the Constitution and to everything that is noble in the character of the people of these realms.

VISCOUNT CRANBOURNE.—We have witnessed to-night what may be called a lover's quarrel between Mr. BRIGHT and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. No deep wound was inflicted; but just such kind and gentle censure has been administered as will cover the pretence of there being a difference between them, and will serve to dis-

guise those common and conjoint intrigues which have been the occupation of the winter. In main points, however, Government have scrupulously followed Mr. BRIGHT's dictation. Mr. GLADSTONE has passed through many phases of character; but there is one golden link that connects them all, and that is his persistent, undying, hatred of the rural interest. The counties now have two grievances: first, the number of their representatives is inadequate as compared to the boroughs; secondly, their rural votes are swamped by the urban votes of unrepresented towns among them. This state of things must be infinitely aggravated by the proposed Bill, and in more than a quarter of the counties of England the county representation must be turned into an urban representation. If there is to be a Re-distribution Bill, it ought to come side by side with the Franchise Bill, in order that we may see the bearings of one upon the other. Referring to statistics, I find that in seven boroughs, which have thirteen members, the working class are in a majority with a 10*l.* franchise; in twenty-two boroughs, with forty members, they have it at 8*l.*; and in forty-seven boroughs, with eighty members, at 7*l.* Therefore, according to the Government statistics, if this Bill pass, there will be 133 members at the absolute disposal of the working classes. You will say that that of the 334 English borough members this will leave 201 middle class members against these 138 working class members. Yes; but now turn to the re-distribution. Almost all the places likely to be disfranchised are on the middle class side of the account, and not on the working class side. By the proposal of 1854, fifty-five middle class seats were to have been taken from boroughs. This would have transferred the majority to the working class members. With this prospect before us, we have a right to ask for some consideration for a class not thought much of now—owners of property. We often hear of the anomaly of the working classes being unrepresented: we hear little of the anomaly that wealth and property are practically unrepresented. The whole centre of gravity of the Constitution now is placed on voters between 30*l.* and 40*l.* If you correct anomalies correct them fairly and fully. The chief function of this House is the management of finance, and one would suppose that he who contributes 10,000*l.* a year, should have a larger voice in the management than he whose contribution is but 10*l.* But no! you allow your policy to be regulated entirely by those who pay smaller sums. Now, practically,

what are the demands of the working-men? They have stated them for themselves at public meetings. They demand manhood suffrage, and without any long waiting for it; that work be provided for all men willing to work. Why, this is a reproduction of the *ateliers nationaux* of the French Revolution. If this Bill pass, Mr. BRIGHT, or some keener demagogue who may supplant him, will next demand still stronger democratic measures, based on these and similar demands of the working classes. If a popular storm, backed by great popular suffering, arise at any time, you must meet it with the force then at your disposal. It will not avail you to have lowered the franchise and tampered with the Constitution now. Rather economise your strength; make head against the violent impulses of the populace, and you may be able to override the tempest we are threatened with, when it shall come.

MR. JOHN HARDY.—Mr. LOWE has grown wiser as he has grown older, and Mr. GLADSTONE never made a more constitutional speech than some years ago, in defence of small boroughs. I am not ashamed to represent a small borough, and I enter this House in a more independent position than those returned by large constituencies, and pledged to support a Reform Bill. The present measure begins at the wrong end. I would have supported a re-distribution Bill. Mr. GLADSTONE considers that a 6*l.* franchise would swamp the constituencies, and yet he goes within 1*l.* of that dangerous limit. I am not against extending the franchise, but I am against lowering it; and I will give my most hearty opposition to the Bill of the Government.

MR. HIBBERT.—I consider that the statistics given overstate the share of the working-men in the representation. I hope Members on this side the House will be united, and enable Government no longer to dally with this question, but to carry their Bill by a large majority.

SIR RAINALD KNIGHTLY.—I move the adjournment of the Debate.

[The question of Adjournment was put, and negatived without a division.]

SIR RAINALD KNIGHTLY.—I consider that this Bill will augment the disproportionate influence of the boroughs as compared with the counties.

The Hon. W. DUNCOMBE.—I desire a return of 40*s.* freeholders in counties, and of how many of them belong to the working class.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.—I do not think this information can be obtained. Moreover, it would be objectless, as it is not proposed to give the working class a county franchise. As there is no desire that the debate should be adjourned, I will not trouble the House with any reply, but will merely say that the Government is quite content with the course of the discussion, and perfectly satisfied that their measure will receive full, fair, and earnest consideration at the hands of the House of Commons.

The question being put, leave was given, and the Bill, having been formally brought in by the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, SIR GEORGE GREY, and MR. VILLIERS, was read a first time.

The second reading was fixed for the 12th April.

THE BILL.

A BILL TO EXTEND THE RIGHT OF VOTING AT ELECTIONS OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

Whereas it is expedient to extend the right of voting at elections of members of Parliament for counties, cities, and boroughs in England and Wales:

Be it enacted by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

Preliminary.

I. This Act may be cited for all purposes as "The Franchise Act, 1866."

II. This Act shall not apply to Scotland or Ireland, or to the University of Oxford or Cambridge.

III. The following terms shall in this Act have the meanings hereinafter assigned to them, unless there is something in the context repugnant to such construction; that is to say—

"Month" shall mean calendar month.

"Member" shall include a knight of the shire.

"County" shall not include a county of a city or county of a town, but shall extend to and mean any county, riding, parts or division of a county, returning a member or members to serve in Parliament.

"Borough" shall extend to and mean any borough, city, place, or combination of places, not being a county as hereinbefore defined, returning a member or members to serve in Parliament, and shall include every place sharing in the election of a member for a borough.

"Clear yearly value," as applied to any premises, shall mean a sum equal in amount to the rent a tenant might reasonably be expected to pay by the year for such premises if let to him, he undertaking to pay all usual tenant's rates and taxes, and tithe commutation rent-charge (if any), but no deductions being made in respect of the probable annual average cost of repairs, insurance, and other expenses (if any) necessary to maintain the premises in a state to command such rent; and for the purposes of this Act the gross estimated rental for the time being of any premises, as ascertained for the purposes of the poor rate, shall, until the contrary is proved, be deemed to be the clear yearly value of such premises.

"The Registration Acts" shall mean the Act of the sixth year of the reign of Her present Majesty, chapter 18, and the Act of the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Her present Majesty, chapter 36, and any other Acts or parts of Acts relating to the registration or qualification of persons entitled to vote at the election of members to serve in Parliament for England and Wales.

COUNTY AND BOROUGH FRANCHISES.

IV. Every man shall be entitled to be registered as a voter, and when registered to vote for a member or members to serve in Parliament for a county, who is qualified as follows, that is to say:—

1. Is of full age, and not subject to any legal incapacity; and,

2. Is on the last day of July in any year, and has during the twelve months immediately preceding, been the occupier, as owner or tenant, of premises of any tenure within the county of a clear yearly value of 14*l.* or upwards.

3. The qualifying premises must consist of a house or other building which, either alone or with land held by the occupier in the county, is of the value aforesaid, with this proviso, that where the premises consist partly of a house or other building and partly of land, the building must either be the dwelling-house of the occupier, or must itself be of a clear yearly value of 6*l.* or upwards; and,

4. Where the occupier is tenant of the qualifying premises the whole must be held under the same landlord.

V. Every man shall be entitled to be registered as a voter, and when registered to vote for a member or members to serve in Parliament for a borough, who is qualified as follows:—

1. Is of full age, and not subject to any legal incapacity; and,

2. Is on the last day of July in any year, and has during the twelve months immediately preceding, been the occupier, as owner or tenant, of premises of any tenure within the borough of the clear yearly value of 7*l.* or upwards.

3. The qualifying premises must consist of a house or other building which, either alone or with land held by the occupier within the borough, is of the value aforesaid, with this proviso, that where the premises consist partly of a house or other building and partly of land, the building must either be the dwelling-house of the occupier or must itself be of a clear yearly value of 3*l.* or upwards; and,

4. Where the occupier is tenant of the qualifying premises the whole must be held under the same landlord; and,

5. The occupier must have resided in the borough, or within seven statute miles of some part of the borough, for the six months immediately preceding the said last day of July in such year.

VI. Different premises occupied in succession by any person as owner or tenant shall have the same effect in qualifying such person to vote for a county or borough as the continued occupation of the same premises, and where premises are in the joint occupation of several persons as owners or tenants, and the aggregate value of such premises is such as, estimated according to this Act, and divided amongst the several occupiers, would, so far as the value is concerned, confer on each of them a vote, then each of such joint occupiers shall, if otherwise qualified, and subject to the conditions of this Act, be entitled to be registered as a voter, and when registered to vote at an election for any county or borough.

VII. Every man shall be entitled to be registered as a voter, and when registered to vote for a member or members to serve in Parliament for a borough, who is qualified as follows (that is to say):—

1. Is of full age, and not subject to any legal incapacity; and

2. Is on the 1st day of July in any year the occupier of lodgings within the borough, and during the twelve months immediately preceding has been in the occupation of the same lodgings, such lodgings being part of a dwelling-house, and of a clear yearly value, if let unfurnished, of 10*l.* or upwards; and

3. Has resided in such lodgings during the six months immediately preceding the said 1st day of July; and has on or before the 20th day of July in each year claimed to be registered as a voter at the next ensuing registration of voters.

VIII. Every man shall be entitled to be registered as a voter, and when registered to vote at the election of a member or members to serve in Parliament for a county or borough, who is qualified as follows (that is to say):—

1. Is of full age, and not subject to any legal incapacity; and

2. Has resided in such county or borough for a period of six months immediately preceding the 1st day of July in any year, and for the two years immediately preceding the said 1st day of July has kept a balance of not less than 50*l.* deposited in some savings-bank in his own name and for his own use; and

3. Has on or before the 20th day of July in each year claimed to be registered as a voter at the next ensuing registration of voters.

REGULATIONS AS TO RATING.

IX. In every rate made for the relief of the poor the following rule shall be observed (that is to say):—

1. Every house or other set of premises occupied by a different person as owner or tenant shall be entered separately in the rate-book, whether the owner is or is not assessed to, or has not compounded for, the rate payable in respect of such premises, and in every case the gross estimated rental, as well as the rateable value of the premises, and the name of the person occupying as owner or tenant, shall be specified.

2. Where a house or other building forms part of any premises hereby required to be separately entered, the rate-book shall, in describing the premises, specify the fact of their being such house or other building.

3. For the purposes of this section, persons occupying jointly as owners or tenants shall be dealt with as if they were one occupier, with this difference, that the names of all such occupiers shall be stated, with the addition that they are joint occupiers.

4. Every rate made for the relief of the poor shall, in addition to any other particulars which the form of making out such rate may require to be set forth, contain an account of every particular set forth in the Form marked A in the Schedule to this Act annexed, so far as the same can be ascertained.

REGISTRATION OF VOTERS.

X. The following regulations shall be observed with respect to the registration of voters:—

1. The overseers of every parish or township shall make out or cause to be made out a list of all persons on whom a right to vote in respect of the occupation of premises is conferred by this Act, in the same manner and subject to the same regulations, as nearly as circumstances admit, in and subject to which the overseers of parishes and townships in boroughs are required by the Registration Acts to make out or cause to be made out a list of all persons entitled to vote for a member or members of a borough in respect of the occupation of premises of the clear yearly value of not less than 10*l.*

2. In boroughs the claim of every person desirous of being registered as a voter for a member or members to serve for such borough in respect of the occupation of lodgings shall be in the Form marked B in the said Schedule, and have annexed thereto a declaration in the form and be certified in manner in the said Schedule mentioned, or as near thereto as circumstances admit.

3. The claim of any person desirous of being registered as a voter for a Member or Members to serve for any county or borough in respect of a qualification as a depositor in a savings bank shall be in the form marked C in the

said Schedule, or as near thereto as circumstances admit; but no such claim shall be received by the Overseers unless it have annexed thereto a certificate in the form marked D in the said Schedule, or as near thereto as circumstances admit, and signed in the case of a Post Office savings bank by some officer authorized to sign the same by the Postmaster-General; and in the case of any other savings bank, by two of the trustees or managers of such savings bank, or by some officer authorized by them.

4. The Overseers in counties and boroughs shall annually give notice requiring every person claiming to be registered in respect of a qualification to vote as a lodger or as a depositor in a savings bank to send in his claim to them, such notice to be given in the same manner, so far as circumstances admit, in which Overseers in counties give notice under the law now in force to persons desirous of being placed on the list of county voters requiring such persons to send in their claims to the Overseers.

5. Upon the receipt of a claim by a person claiming to be registered as a lodger, having annexed thereto such declaration and certified as aforesaid, or of a claim accompanied by such certificate as aforesaid, on the part of a person claiming to be registered as a depositor in a savings bank, the Overseers may make all such objections to the claim so made as Overseers in counties are empowered to make in receiving claims of voters, but, subject thereto, shall place the claimant on the list of voters for the parish or township in which the residence of the voter is situate.

6. All the provisions of the Registration Acts shall apply to voters on whom the franchise is conferred by this Act, in the same manner in all respects, so far as is practicable, as they apply to the voters in the said Acts mentioned.

7. All precepts, notices, lists of voters, registers of voters, instruments, and proceedings relating to the registration of voters, shall be altered, framed, and expressed in such manner as may be necessary for carrying into effect the provisions of this Act.

XI. Every person on whom a right of voting at an election of a Member or Members for a county or borough is conferred by this Act shall, subject to the conditions affecting his right to be registered in any year, be entitled to be registered in any register of voters to be formed for such county or borough subsequently to the 10th day of June which first happens after the passing of this Act, and shall be entitled to vote at any election of a Member or Members for such county or borough which may take place after the formation of such register.

XII. If any person whose certificate is required under this Act in support of the claim of a person to vote in respect of a qualification as depositor in a savings bank wilfully refuses to give such certificate, he shall, on summary conviction, be liable to a penalty not exceeding 5*l*.

XIII. If any person is guilty of any of the following offences, that is to say:—

1. Wilfully gives any certificate required by this Act falsely;

2. Forges, counterfeits, or alters any such certificate, or any signature thereto;

3. Knowingly makes use of, in support of a claim to vote, any false certificate, or any forged, counterfeited, or altered certificate;

4. Wilfully makes any false statement in any claim or makes any false declaration in respect of any claim made under the provisions of this Act;

Such person shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and, on being convicted thereof, shall be liable to imprisonment with hard labour for a term not exceeding two years.

Amendment and Repeal of Acts.

XIV. Subject to the provisions of this Act all laws, statutes, usages, provisions, and penalties now in force respecting the registration of voters and election of Members to serve in Parliament for England and Wales shall be

and remain in full force, and apply to any persons acquiring or seeking to acquire a vote under this Act.

XV. Sections 24 and 25 of the Act of the second year of King William IV, chapter 45, shall be repealed, and in place thereof be it enacted, no person shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for a county Member or Members in respect of any premises situate in a borough if he would be entitled to be registered in respect of such premises as a voter for a Member or Members of Parliament to serve for such borough.

XVI. No person employed in any Government arsenal, dockyard, or yard, or in any factory connected with Her Majesty's army or navy, shall be capable of voting at any election of Members for the county or borough within which such arsenal, dockyard, yard, or factory is situate during the time that he is so employed, and for two months after he has quitted such employment; and the vote of such person, if given, shall be void, notwithstanding that the name of such person may have been inserted in the register in force at the time of such election.

XVII. The power of inspecting and making extracts from rate-books given by the 16th section of the Act of the 6th year of the reign of Her present Majesty, chapter 18, to any person whose name is on any list of voters for the time being for any city or borough, or who claims to have his name inserted in any such list, shall extend and be exercised to or by any person whose name is on any list of voters for the time being for any county, or to or by any person who claims to have his name inserted in such list.

XVIII. Every person claiming to vote as a depositor in a savings bank shall vote at the booth at which he would vote if he were registered as a voter in respect of property situate in the parish, township, or place in which he resides.

XIX. There shall be repealed—

1. The whole of the Act of the session of the 11th and 12th years of Her present Majesty, chapter 90, intituled "An Act to regulate the Times of Payments of Rates and Taxes by Parliamentary Electors;" and all other enactments now in force which require, as a condition of the registration in any year of any voter, or of his title to vote, that he should have paid any rates or taxes; or direct overseers to give public notice as to the payment of rates and taxes by occupiers of premises; or provide that the assessors or collectors of taxes are to deliver to the overseers a list of persons in arrear of taxes payable as therein mentioned;

2. So much of the 79th section of the Act of the 6th year of the reign of Her present Majesty, chapter 18, as relates to the residence of voters at the time at which they give their votes; and any other enactments that are inconsistent with this Act.

SAVING CLAUSE.

XX. Nothing herein contained shall affect the right which any person may have acquired of voting at the election of a member or members to serve in Parliament for a county or borough in pursuance of any register of voters in force at the time of the passing of this Act, so long as such voter retains the qualification in respect of which he is registered at the time of the passing of this Act.

SCHEDULE.

FORM A.

AN Assessment for the Relief of the Poor of the Parish of Saint Mary's, in the City of Carlisle, and for other Purposes chargeable thereon according to Law, made this 25th day of March, in the Year of Our Lord 1866, after the Rate of One Shilling in the Pound.

No.	ARREARS.		RATE.									
	Due or if Excused.	If Excused write the word "Excused."	Name of Occupier.	Name of Owner.	Description of Property Rated.	Name or Situation of Property.	Estimated Extent.	Gross Estimated Rental.	Rateable Value.	Rate at 1s. in the £	Amount of Rate assessed upon and payable by the Owner instead of the Occupier, by virtue of the Statute or Statutes in that behalf.
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
	£ s. d.						A. R. P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1	...	...	James Smith ...	John Green ...	House	Tower Street ...	... ...	30 0 0	25 0 0	1 5 0	—
2	...	...	William Jones .	William Fisher .	Warehouse ...	Fisher Street ...	... ...	24 0 0	20 0 0	1 0 0	—
3	...	...	Henry Parker .	William Fisher .	Building and land	Pearce's Lane ...	2 0 0	7 10 0	6 15 0	0 6 9	—
4	...	...	Moses Waite ...	Abel Turner ...	House	North Street ...	... ...	7 10 0	6 0 0	0 6 0	0 4 6

72

Form B.

Claim of Lodger.

Borough of

To the Overseers of the Parish [or Township] of

I hereby claim to be inserted in the list of voters in respect of the occupation of the under-mentioned lodgings, and the particulars of my qualification are stated in the columns below:

Christian Name and Surname at full length.	Profession, Trade, or Calling.	Description of Lodgings.	Description of House in which Lodgings situate, with Number, if any, and Name of Street.	Name, Description, and Residence of Landlord or other person to whom Rent paid.

I, the above-named , hereby declare that I was [or am], on the 1st day of July in this year, and have been during the twelve months immediately preceding, the occupier of the above mentioned lodgings, and that I have resided therein during the six months immediately preceding the said 1st day of July, and that such lodgings are of a clear yearly value, if let unfurnished, of £10 or upwards.

Dated the day of

Signature of Claimant .....

Witness to the signature of the said }

And I certify my belief in the accuracy of the above claim. } .....

Name of witness .....

Residence and calling .....

This claim must bear date the 1st day of July, or some day subsequent thereto, and must be delivered to the overseer on or before the 20th day of July.

Form C.

Claim in respect of Deposit in Savings Bank.

County of
or
City [or Borough of] }

To the Overseers of the Parish [or Township] of

I hereby claim to be inserted in the list of voters as a depositor in a savings bank, and the particulars of my place of abode and qualification are stated in the columns below:—

Christian Name and Surname at full length.	Profession, Trade, or Calling.	Place of Abode, with Number of House, Name of Street, &c. (if any).	Nature and Particulars of Qualification.	Number of Certificate annexed.*
			Depositor in the Savings Bank of	

* Insert the distinguishing number of the annexed certificate.

This claim must bear date the 1st day of July, or some day subsequent thereto, and must be delivered to the overseer, with the certificate annexed, on or before the 20th day of July.

FORM D.

CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT IN SAVINGS BANKS.

Certificate No .

We, the undersigned [being two of the trustees [or managers] of the Savings Bank], or [I, the Undersigned, being an officer appointed and authorized by the trustees [or managers] of the Savings Bank for that purpose], or [I, the undersigned, being an officer appointed by Her Majesty's Postmaster-General], do hereby certify that of has a sum of not less than £50 deposited in the said bank, and that he has had not less than such amount so deposited in the said bank for the two years immediately preceding the 1st day of July in this present year.

Dated the day of 18 .

Signature and description of persons signing .....

Official address .....

NOTE.—The officers by whom these certificates are granted must insert a distinguishing number to each certificate.

The certificate must be dated on or subsequently to the 1st day of July, and must be delivered to the overseer, with the claim, on or before the 20th day of July.

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